



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

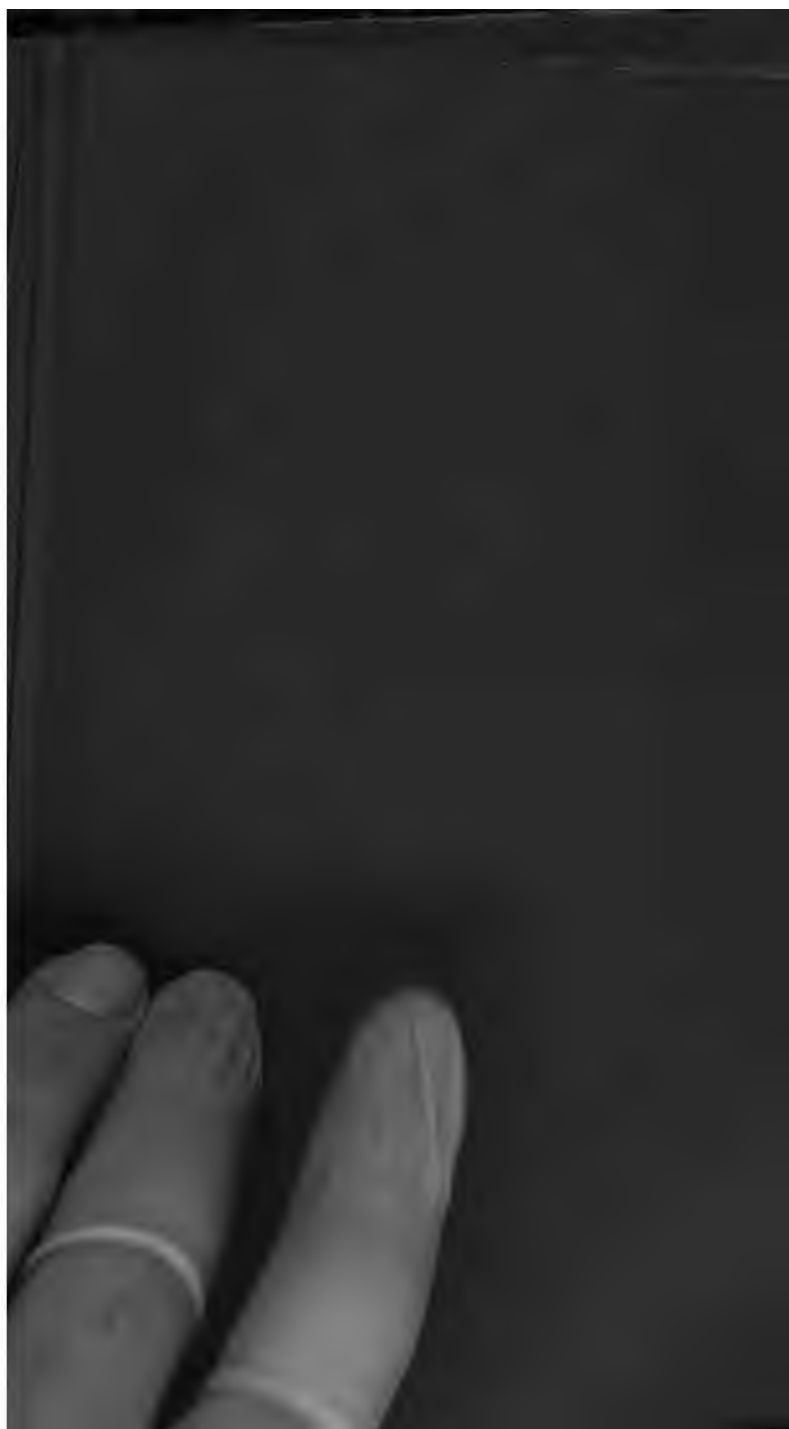
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600072086T



1

THE
MORNING OF LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"GORDON OF DUNCAIRN."

"Yet we are able only to survey
Dawnings of beams, and promises of day."—PRIOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHARLES WESTERTON,
Publisher,
20, ST. GEORGE'S PLACE,
HYDE PARK CORNER.
1859.

LONDON :
Printed by A. Schulze, 13, Poland Street.



THE
MORNING OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

“ To muse and brood, and live again in memory
With those old faces of our infancy.”

TENNYSON.

My hands, holding the book, dropped upon my knees with the last word I read. The sound of my voice had lulled my charge into a sweet sleep, while the words had carried my own thoughts far away from the scene before me, back to the earlier years of my life.

I turned to gaze upon the view from the window ; what a glorious sight it was !

The sun was setting, gorgeously, but angrily he had, as it were, forced his way through a massive heap of blue-black clouds ; and from the red glowing disk streamed out rays of brilliancy

VOL. I.

which tipped their edges with bright copper, thence graduating into dark mulberry, and deep purple. Above this cloudy bank was a lake of greenish blue, over which floated light foamy flakes of vapour: the lowest, just catching some stray beams, were of a rich saffron, then gold, then pale grey, like the ashes of a burnt-out volcano; while, above all, spread out the deep blue ether, already beginning to darken into night. The tips of the distant forest-covered mountains intercepted the horizontal rays of the sun as he sank behind them, sprinkling the far-off prospect with gold-dust.

All this magnificence was imaged in the waters of the wide lake at the foot of the declivity on which the house stood; the beautiful banks stretching away as far as the eye could reach, clothed with heavy foliage, except where here and there a green glade opened out, or a patch of bare and broken ground suggested the residence of settlers like ourselves. Some Indians had encamped at no great distance, and the blue smoke from their fires was seen rising through the trees, the thin, light columns catching some of the golden tints of the atmosphere as they mingled with it.

In the immediate foreground were the signs of civilized human life ; patches of land more or less cleared, large piles of blocks still smouldering, with black, charred stumps standing up in all directions. Here and there stood a tall, slim, branchless tree, spared only to be laid low by the next storm, but around which still clung some of the gorgeous parasitical plants of the country, clothing the bare unsightly poles with their bright blossoms, like love trying to conceal and beautify the deficiencies of its idol. And through all this wide landscape what a silence ! Only the sound of the ox-bells as the patient animals came slowly home from their labour, the barking of the dogs belonging to the farm, or the voices of the men returning from their work, making the stillness even more profound ; and, as the last limb of the glorious sun sank below the horizon, darkness fell almost instantaneously over the landscape.

With the departure of light, my thoughts flew back to the Old World, and those who had there caused or shared my joys and sorrows, and I thought I might beguile the tedium of this weary waiting time, when day after day I can do little but sit still and watch, by writing down

some of those occurrences which had so chequered my life.

My father was the Rector of Arden Rise, one of the prettiest villages in the south-west of England, lying amid beautiful woodland scenery and pasture-land, plentifully watered by pleasant, music-making brooks. The little nest of thatched cottages, each standing in a garden of its own, the venerable church with its tall, slender spire, and the lowly, picturesque Rectory, thatched like the humbler dwellings and covered with creepers, adjoining the churchyard, formed the entire village, though the parish extended farther, including one or two gentlemen's seats, and some distant fishermen's cottages scattered along the coast; for, secluded as the place seemed, we were not far from the sea, and the thymy breezy hills which sloped gently upwards from the village terminated on the other side in abrupt, steep cliffs washed by the waves, so that often before heavy weather we could hear the deep diapason of the ground swell, as ocean was slowly lashing himself into fury.

The first event of which I have any recollection, was the death of my mother; it occurred when

I was too young to understand the misfortune which had befallen me, a misfortune which, like all the great facts that influence our lives, came only gradually to be appreciated. All I remember of this dark shadow, is the stillness so painfully enforced upon us children, the grief of my father, and the deep feeling of solemnity which, aided by the black frocks, extended even to the nursery. My brother, Philip, was then about six years old, Amy two years younger, and I but an infant.

A few years of free happy childhood went by, and then a governess came to the house, and the hitherto undisputed sway of nurse Phœbe, was at an end. I have little recollection of the days before Miss Fleming assumed the reins of government. I believe various dynasties had risen and fallen before that time, and still we were an unconquered people. Three wilder children could perhaps hardly have been met with. My father, occupied all day either in the parish or his study, left the guidance of his family almost entirely to the lady who presided for the time being in the school-room; and, as he was known to be stern and resolute, when his interference was really called for, it was

not till insubordination had reached its culminating point in the school-room, that the culprit was dragged screaming, struggling and protesting, to his study, onto the floor of which she was unceremoniously flung in a state of fury and exasperation, equalled only by the agitation of the governess who, by sheer force, had brought her to that spot.

Aroused from his studies by this rude irruption, and utterly unable to obtain a coherent relation of facts from the governess or the sobbing child, my father generally made short work of the matter, and either participating in the general excitement, or hopeless of restoring order by other means, would seize the light riding-whip which hung within reach of his chair, and, administering a sharp castigation, dismiss complainant and defendant; the latter reduced to sullen silence, though inwardly boiling with a rage which shewed itself in a variety of ways, irritating enough, and only to be subdued eventually by coaxing and bribing. For the most part, the two not implicated espoused the cause of the rebel on these occasions, looking on in awe and wonder while she was being dragged to punishment, and resenting the injury, openly

or covertly according to disposition, when the so called justice had been administered.

Philip and I always appeared in open revolt under such circumstances, refusing to hold any intercourse with the governess, upholding and assisting the culprit, and making the school-room perfectly untenable by the lawful authorities till an amnesty was proclaimed.

Amy had more of the courtier, and while apparently sharing the indignation and vindicating the wrongs of the oppressed, always managed somehow to ingratiate herself with the oppressor. She had a mode, too, of setting us on to acts of provocation, and then affecting to rebuke and regret our violence, so as always to keep favour with the ruling powers ; and though we secretly felt the treachery and openly accused her of it, she always managed to appease our anger, or bespeak our indulgence, so that we never could bring ourselves to acts of retaliation, threaten as we might.

Another circumstance I remember, which was a perpetual source of misery to me especially. Notwithstanding his severity, my father was exceedingly fond of us : he took great interest in our education, and was particularly

desirous that we should excel in all accomplishments. By way of testing our progress in music, and inciting us to diligence, he made it a rule that Amy and myself should play to him every day after dinner, which, in order that we might all partake of it together, was always ed at five o'clock.

I recollect how often my appetite was spoiled by apprehension of the coming exhibition, for I was a timid child, notwithstanding the animal traits I have spoken of, by no means endowed with abilities of any description, and painfully sensible of my dullness—while Amy, on the contrary, was decidedly talented, and consciousness of power gave her courage.

I can call to mind now, the sinking of heart with which I saw the first move towards the piano, which for greater convenience, in those days stood in the dining-room. Amy invariably came off with colours flying, and I as regularly with banners reversed, while Philip, whose sex saved him from the ordeal, would sit making comical grimaces, expressive of triumph or dismay, and I slunk back to my place, swallowing down with difficulty tears of vexation, enhanced by the knowledge that timidity alone

was often the cause of my failure. I am afraid that envy and even less amiable feelings mingled with my mortification, as I listened to Amy's praises from my father, echoed by those of Miss Fleming, and I can remember the bitter swelling of the heart when my own shortcomings were alluded to, often accompanied by the threat that I should be sent to school—that sentence so greatly dreaded, not altogether on account of the banishment from home perhaps, so much as for the cause of the banishment.

Philip was my comforter at these times ; and, when we were dismissed to our amusements, he would always come with a word of fondness or encouragement, schoolboy-like of its kind, but not the less welcome.

I had another friend and supporter, too, in one who was often a guest at our table, Mr. Annesley of Beechley Grange, and probably from the generous motive which almost always leads the strong to befriend the weak, he invariably advocated my cause.

"You are a silly little trembler, Mabel," he would often say, stroking my head as I returned to the table, "I heard you playing that piece

like a professor this morning only ; why can't you look upon us all as cabbage-stalks ?”

The same advice, too, was often given by Miss Fleming, but I never could succeed in mentally degrading the human form divine, to the standard of those valuable esculents.

One day, as my father's musical ears had been more than commonly excruciated by my mangled performance of a piece of Mozart's, and he and Miss Fleming were venting their usual lamentations over my deplorable want of ability, I heard Mr. Annesley pleading my cause.

“You must have patience with Mabel, Mr. Willoughby,” he said, “time will do wonders with her : remember that trees of the slowest growth, form the strongest and most valuable wood.”

I did not comprehend his meaning at the time, though I often pondered his words, because I saw that they made my father more tolerant of my mediocrity for a while.

This ‘trial by music,’ as Philip called it, was not established till Miss Fleming had accepted the unenviable post of guide of the youthful mind in our family. She was a person of more

authority than her predecessors, and possessed what was wholly wanting in them, integrity of principle, though unfortunately lacking judgment. After she came, there were no more scenes of passion and exasperation, of bribery and coaxing; by firmness and gentleness she reduced her subjects to obedience; and, though taming us was a slow process, it had been accomplished at the time I speak of. Her fault was, as I have said, weakness of judgment, which led her to excite in us a spirit of emulation detrimental to the nobler qualities of the heart, and also deluded her into the error of open and declared favouritism, perhaps in our case the less to be wondered at, as Amy had so very decidedly the advantage of me in every respect. Her manners were so pleasing, and mine often sullen, for I felt myself misunderstood, and without power to put myself right with others. While Amy learned quickly, I was dull; she was besides very lovely, and there was nothing attractive in an unformed awkward girl like myself; added to all this, my father showed a decided preference for my sister, which no doubt had weight with our governess.

From my earliest recollection I was always a

lover of solitude; and, as I generally found myself willingly abandoned to its indulgence, I can easily believe that my manners must have been repulsive: the strange thing was that Mr. Annesley, in spite of all, showed a decided preference for me; was it to be wondered at that as years went on this led me to suppose—Well, that is over.

After Philip went to school, Mr. Annesley was my only champion; and, as his visits to the Grange were usually shorter than the intervals of his absence, I was growing up much like an Ishmaelite, indeed, with “my hand against every man, and every man’s hand against me.”

But even then I was sensible of dormant powers. Music I was passionately fond of, but the very enjoyment I had in sweet sounds made the mechanical effort of steady practice, blundering over passages which detached from the melody had no meaning, and dwelling for an hour together on mere scales, a weariness and an abomination. When later in life, music did really become one of my attainments, it seemed to flash upon me suddenly, as the power of speaking and comprehending a language will often do, when after plodding on day after day

in a state of hopeless darkness, one emerges unexpectedly into light. It was the same with drawing, for I never could be made to comprehend rules; and, in this respect, my intellect might be said to be truly feminine, reaching the object at a bound, that it never could attain step by step.

Reading and dreaming were the great pleasures of my life. It was not often that I ventured to take a volume out of my father's library, for I was conscious of the low esteem I was held in, but here Mr. Annesley's friendship aided me.

There was a large and valuable library at the Grange, rich, not only in quaint old authors, but in the best writers of more modern date; to this I had almost unlimited access, subject only to the supervision and direction of Mr. Annesley, who constituted himself my tutor, stimulating me to the acquisition of languages, dead and living, by exciting the desire to read in the original, works, the translations of which he put into my hands, while besides being an accomplished linguist himself, he had also the art of leading me on by pleasant bye-paths, avoiding the hard high road; thus the difficulties were sur-

mounted so gradually and almost unconsciously, that, before Amy had well mastered French and Italian, I found myself able to read in more languages than good Miss Fleming would have thought at all consistent with the education of a young lady, had I let her into the secret of my acquirements.

Often have I submitted to be taunted with indolence and an addiction to novels, when excusing myself from the daily walk, my time has been spent in much more arduous studies.

When Mr. Annesley was at home, the book that he wished me to read was always left on the table ; and, when he left the country, he used to arrange on a particular shelf, the volumes which were to be my study during his absence.

In winter, the library was my retreat, and in summer there was a charming old summer-house overlooking the Park at the end of the green terrace, where I used to ensconce myself, and where, when tired of reading, I would yield to the pleasure of dreaming—act over in my mind the history I had been devouring, enter into the spirit of my favourite characters, and make their deeds and words my own.

It was a fascinating life ; and, though it had its dangers, I was perhaps in some degree shielded from these by the care of Mr. Annesley, while I think it had the effect of hardening and strengthening the wood which he averred my mind was made of.

CHAPTER II.

“ What time the morning sun of hope arose.
And all was joy ; save when another’s woes
A transient gloom upon my soul imprest,
Like passing clouds impictured on thy breast.”

COLERIDGE.

AFTER the Grange, the entrance to which was in the village, the place nearest to us was Arden House, belonging to Mrs. Mainwaring, a widow at the time of which I write, though she had not been so long. The death of her husband, however, was an event of very little moment to the neighbourhood, or apparently to herself. During his lifetime, the place had always been known as *Mrs.* Mainwaring’s, and few people had ever either seen or heard much of that lesser half whose name she bore.

He was, I believe, very much older than herself, and in so far well suited to her, that being of a nervous temperament, averse to society, and anything like business, he willingly gave up the whole management of his affairs into the hands of his more active and capable wife; allowing her also to enter as much as she pleased into society, provided that he was not expected to accompany her in her visits, or to act the part of host at the entertainments which she gave at home. The death of one, therefore, who, during life, had been so utterly extinguished, caused no blank in the neighbourhood, and even his widow sustained the loss so heroically, that when at the end of a very short period, her weeds were discarded, there was no difference perceptible in the state of things at Arden House.

The walk thither, through the woods and across the fields, was a great favourite with us; and, besides the pleasure of the stroll, we had no objection to a gossip with the lady herself, who, though no longer young, was nevertheless a very popular character with youth, more so, perhaps, than with those of maturer age, who were apt to consider her too fond of meddling

in affairs that did not concern her. Certain it is that she was gifted with great energy as well as inquisitiveness, both qualities likely to become troublesome when their possessor has no particular object to which to devote them. Such was not, perhaps, altogether Mrs. Mainwaring's case, either as wife or widow; but her mind was of too active a nature, to be so wholly occupied with her husband's affairs or her own, as not to leave a large superfluity of interest and energy at the disposal of her neighbours, the rich as well as the poor.

Notwithstanding some few drawbacks, however, Mrs. Mainwaring could boast of so many recommendations, that she had few, or perhaps no, real enemies. She was good-natured and lively, and possessed a wonderful fluency of words, which made her a valuable acquisition to a party of any kind, while a habit of collecting gossip and news of every description, contracted as she averred, for the sake of furnishing amusement to her husband, gave her the character of a useful referee when local information of any sort was wanted. With much fussiness, too, she combined the art of always knowing what was to be done, and how best to do it, so

that even those who most rebelled against her interference, were often glad of her aid.

Dress, that index of the mind, was one of her weak points; no one in the neighbourhood displayed such an elaborate toilette as Mrs. Mainwaring on occasions of state; but as the ordinary requirements of her active life were not favourable to splendour of attire, there was a considerable discrepancy between the home and the visiting costume. Perhaps there are few things in which character is, unconsciously, more displayed than in dress; apart from the arrangement of colours, which depends more on an artistic eye probably, than altogether on the qualities of the mind; a nice observer can easily detect vulgarity or refinement of character, with their various intermediate shades, in the adornment of the person.

The calm and well-balanced mind, the pure, the vain, the worldly, the careless, the haughty and humble, the prude, and the coquette, each involuntarily displays thus the peculiar idiosyncrasy, and however the art may be studied or despised, not the less will faithful indications of the mind of the wearer, be traceable in the costume.

I am afraid this shewed one of the defective sides of Mrs. Mainwaring's character. A love of display and superiority alternated with a fondness for peering into the minutiae of things, which caused her toilette to be always in extremes, and it was at its rebound, so to speak, that we found her one morning, when, thanks to my having taken the bass in a duet with Amy at our 'trial by music' of the previous evening, and having consequently shared her triumph, Miss Fleming had given us the reward of a walk to Arden House, and herself the treat of a gossip with its mistress; for, grave and sedate as our good governess was, she was by no means above taking a feminine delight in that pastime.

"Oh, my dear Miss Fleming, so it is only you!" Mrs. Mainwaring exclaimed, with evident relief, as we were ushered into the drawing-room on our arrival. "I am sure you will excuse my dress," she continued, looking down upon her costume, which was certainly more negligent than either elegant or neat; her spirits, too, were in a corresponding state of depression, and we had to listen to a long catalogue of annoyances and grievances, interspersed

with allusions to the "dear departed," who though such a cypher in his lifetime, since his death had often been allowed to acquire more importance, till having by degrees talked herself into a more cheerful frame of mind, she turned to Amy, as if seeing her for the first time, and exclaimed :

"My darling Amy, how bright and beautiful you look ! How do you manage to keep those curls always so glossy, and those eyes so sparkling ?" and she stooped to kiss her, as Amy tossed back the sunny locks, which in truth were very lovely, with a look between pleasure and scorn.

"And the quiet little Mabel, too," Mrs. Mainwaring went on, "so your friend, Mr. Annesley, has run away again, my dear ; pretty goings on indeed !" she added, shaking her head at me, playfully. "I hear of your flirtations at the Grange, and think it high time the master left."

Poor Miss Fleming looked rather shocked on hearing such an address to one of her pupils, and, after fidgetting for a minute, she drew herself up with a slight cough, and said :—

"I am sure, Mrs. Mainwaring, Mabel's good

sense will tell her that a man of Mr. Annesley's age, is only desirous to correct her idle habits, and lead her to take pleasure in study."

Now there were things that annoyed me, both in the remark of the one lady, and the reply of the other. I felt that Mrs. Mainwaring had no business to comment on Mr. Annesley's conduct, and that Miss Fleming knew nothing at all about the matter. I hated the word "flirtation" too, coupled with my kind friend's name; child as I was, I was sensible of the vulgarity and inaptness of it as connected with him and myself, and at the same time I resented equally Miss Fleming's allusion to his age, for I knew him to be no more than five-and-twenty. So I answered Mrs. Mainwaring carelessly, throwing a withering look of disdain at my governess, "that I was very sorry Mr. Annesley was gone, and should have been still more so had he taken the key of his library with him."

Apparently, however, both ladies were very indifferent on the subject, for Mrs. Mainwaring, hardly waiting for my reply, turned to the governess, full of a piece of news, which it seemed a great relief to be able to impart.

"Have you heard that the Knoll is taken?"

she asked, and finding an appropriate degree of interest excited in her listeners, she went on. "Yes, the Hon. Mrs. Aubrey has taken it for some years, and is coming there next week with her only son; there, girls, that is news for you."

"News indeed, dear Mrs. Mainwaring," Amy replied, "for except Mr. Annesley, who never deigns to bestow notice upon me, our's is a most conventual society."

"Well, don't raise your expectations too high," Mrs. Mainwaring continued, "there are drawbacks; the young man is going into the army, so he will not be long here. You know he is the nephew and heir of the Earl of Ottersee, and they say is to marry his daughter. Have you never heard the story? oh, it is quite a little romance."

The attention of her auditory was now fully awakened, and though Miss Fleming tried to affect indifference, it was but a thin veil easily penetrated; however, she would fain have made us believe her desirous of the information only on Mr. Willoughby's account, who, she observed, would of course wish to know something about his new parishioner.

"True," Mrs. Mainwaring said, in reply to the suggestion, "but I believe there is not much to be known about Mrs. Aubrey, who is a very every-day sort of person. She is the widow of the Hon. Charles Aubrey, the Earl's brother, but a very different sort of man. Lord Ottersee in his youth was a terrible *roué*, one of the most dissipated and delightful men of his day. Pray don't look so shocked, dear Miss Fleming; I forgot the responsibility of your charge," she added, with a laugh. "Well, he is now past middle age, and a confirmed valetudinarian, with one daughter, a natural child, in whom, however, all his affections are centred. Her mother was a foreigner, a Swede, I believe, and very well born. There were a great many romantic stories about her, but the truth is, that he won her heart, and then deluded her by a mock marriage, and so brought her to Alverstoke Park as his lawful wife.

"Alverstoke, you know, is in the Lake country, a beautiful place, and as old as the Grange, I believe. Well, when the Earl brought his young bride there, the neighbouring families called, and for a time "all went merry as a marriage bell;" but, by degrees, tales began to circu-

late, the truth was gradually oozing out, in that mysterious, unaccountable way in which things do come out ;” (when there is no Mrs. Mainwaring in the neighbourhood, I thought) “people began to look shy upon the pretty, fair-haired Countess, and gentle and pleasing as she was, her acquaintances gradually dropped off.

“Meanwhile, the Earl had become really and fondly attached to her, and anxious to repair the wrong he had done her ; but many difficulties presented themselves, besides those to be expected in a man of his previous life.”

Miss Fleming here interrupted the story in order to supply a moral for the benefit of her pupils, for interested as she clearly was, she was, at the same time, somewhat scandalized. “Evil habits,” she suggested, “were not easily overcome, of whatever kind they might be, which ought to make young people very cautious, especially in the choice of companions.”

Mrs. Mainwaring gave a sly glance at us, and laughed as she went on,

“Very right, Miss Fleming, and there were other things to be considered ; he neither wished to alarm the poor lady, nor to give countenance to the gossip of the neighbourhood ; but, while he

was deliberating how to act, the necessity was put away from him. His victim was gradually learning the truth : the avoidance of her acquaintance had first astonished her, and, as the cause stole slowly round to her, she languished and fell ill, till at last, in the same hour that this child was born, she died. Her death worked a great change in the Earl ; all his old habits and companions were abandoned ; grief for the loss of his poor victim, mingled perhaps with remorse, quite overwhelmed him ; and, from that hour, he devoted himself to the child, Ruth, as he had her named, and insisted on her being styled, Lady Ruth Aubrey.

“ Neither care nor expense has been spared on her education ; all the unentailed and funded property has been settled upon her, so that she will be quite an heiress ; and in order to remedy as far as possible the injury done to her poor mother and herself, he induced his brother to enter into and sign an agreement that his son, the future Earl, should marry her, so that eventually she might become Countess of Ottersee.

“ Of course, the young people may take

other views, as regards the matrimonial part ; but, as the Earldom is considerably impoverished by the alienation of the unentailed property, and Lady Ruth is said to be pretty, and amiable like her mother, and of course highly educated, there can be little doubt as to the course Master Clarence will pursue, I should think. At present, probably, he has not thought much about it ; he is quite a youth, only about eighteen, so doubtless he takes it as a matter of course."

"Then it seems Mr. Aubrey is no great acquisition, after all," laughingly observed Amy ; "he is not to be thought of ; so Mr. Annesley's star is still in the ascendant."

"You saucy girl !" retorted Mrs. Mainwaring, "what will you say when I tell you that Percy Claytoun is coming home on leave soon ? I suppose you will consider him an acquisition ; handsome, agreeable, fashionable, and a man of the world, he will surely compensate for the loss of a boy of eighteen, just fresh from school ?"

Amy tossed her head as she replied :

"The Claytouns belong to Winterford society ; Everleigh Court has always been too far off to bestow any notice upon us : I don't

suppose it will come nearer now, unless," she added, laughing, "we all go in a body to call on Mr. Percy Claytoun."

"Suppose I introduce you," Mrs. Mainwaring suggested.

"And give a ball, or a grand pic-nic; oh do! dear Mrs. Mainwaring!" Amy exclaimed, springing up.

"What does Mabel say?" asked the lady.

"Oh do, Mrs. Mainwaring!" I echoed, while Amy replied, "Mabel is too young to know anything about balls."

"But not too young to care about dancing," I replied rather sharply, feeling that Amy's two or three years of seniority, did not remove her to such an immeasurable distance.

"And, in the meantime, we are forgetting the dinner-hour, young ladies," Miss Fleming remarked, looking at the time-piece, "you know your papa's punctuality, so we must not keep him waiting." And, mingled with the fear of annoying my father, I could not but think was some eagerness to impart the information we had just received, excusable enough certainly, for our life was tolerably monotonous. In the little irregular street, forming the village, events were

neither frequent nor very exciting ; they consisted chiefly of such things as old Mary Hepworth having a fall, or Bryan Maddocks getting a fresh attack of rheumatism, or some delinquency among the school-children ; so, with a hasty farewell, and reminder from Amy to consider the suggested ball or pic-nic, we left Mrs. Mainwaring, and set out on our homeward walk.

The occupation of the Knoll was, indeed, quite an event in our annals ; the house belonged to an old lady whose husband had recently died, and who had now left the neighbourhood, to the society of which she was no loss, since age and infirmity had prevented her mingling in it.

Besides the Knoll and Arden House, we had no immediate neighbour, for Beechley Grange was as good as shut up during many months of the year. There were several families residing in and about Winterford, which was a cathedral-town, but that was some miles off, and while Amy and I were children, our existence had probably been forgotten or unknown ; but now Amy was rising rapidly into young-ladyhood, and was both far too pretty and too conscious of the fact, to

be content longer to remain in such entire seclusion.

It might have been long before my father had found this out for himself, had not Mrs. Mainwaring seized upon so favourable an opportunity for the exercise of her peculiar talent for management; and, soon after our last visit to Arden House, she took occasion to awaken my father's attention to the changes which Time was silently and gradually working in his family.

CHAPTER III.

“ Branches they bore of that enchanted stream,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.”

TENNYSON.

BEECHLEY GRANGE, it is true, was deserted by its master, but that fact by no means lessened its attractions in my eyes, since it possessed still a twofold claim on my affections—its library, and its gardens; and, when not in the mood for delving among the literary treasures of the former, I could turn to the latter, sure of a welcome from old Fenton, the gardener, who took

great pleasure in initiating me into the mysteries of horticulture, and in supplying me with any plants, seeds, or cut flowers for my own use that I might require. Gardening was an amusement I took particular delight in, and being the only one of the family in whom the taste had developed itself, the management of the Rectory-garden was willingly conceded to me, with Jem Maddocks as my trusty henchman.

Not a little proud was I of my flower-beds, and with reason, for few could exceed them in brilliancy and arrangement ; but, as Miss Fleming scarcely considered gardening as a legitimate branch of education, it was necessary to pursue the occupation at times to which she could lay no claim—and of these, the early morning hours best suited both myself and Jem, whose young mind, like my own, was in process of cultivation.

During the summer time, we might be seen hard at work from soon after sunrise till the church bell summoned us with other of the village labourers to the morning prayers, after which, with both of us, the less palatable business of the day began. Indeed, old Fenton was far more proud of me as a pupil than Miss

Fleming, who had little hope of my ever doing credit to her instructions.

As often as I could excuse myself from the afternoon walk, my steps were directed to the Grange; sometimes, indeed, we all went thither; but, while Amy and Miss Fleming rambled in the park or gardens, I used to steal away either to the library or Fenton, and busy myself in the study I felt most disposed for.

It was a picturesque place, the Grange; dating, it was believed, almost from the time of the Conquest; one of those old houses which have, as the saying is, seen better days. The Annesleys at one time, indeed, had been possessors of most of the property in that part of the country; but much of it had been sacrificed in the cause of the Martyr Charles, and a still more considerable portion was lost by attainder in Cromwell's time; so that the Grange property, including the village of Arden Rise, with the advowson of the living, was all that now belonged to them.

The present family consisted of a brother and sister: the latter, and elder by many years, was too delicate to live much at the Grange, so it

was only from time to time that she visited it, in the warm season.

The House was near the village side of the Park, and was a venerable looking building of grey stone presenting every variety of angle and window, as the whim or the convenience of its successive owners had dictated, and covered with a thick growth of ivy and creepers. As long as Mr. Annesley was there, these were kept in good order ; but, during his frequent wanderings, I am afraid old Fenton was not so careful of appearances as he should have been ; the creepers were suffered to run sadly wild, and as the long, straggling branches waved in the wind, they looked like the deserted Penates, beckoning with imploring arms, to their absent master.

The lawn on which the house stood, had been surrounded by a moat, now dry, and the ancient drawbridge had long ago, probably in the reign of Elizabeth, been replaced by a pair of elaborately wrought iron gates, containing the armorial bearings of the family, in all manner of fantastic devices ; from these stretched away an avenue of oaks, bordering the principal approach from the village, and terminating in a corresponding pair of iron gates ; while another

avenue merged gradually into the wilder parts of the Park, where the deer browsed over the ferny uplands.

Behind the house lay the quaint old gardens, to which a walk conducted over a wooden bridge and through a wilderness of laurels and evergreens, interspersed with tall elms, where a colony of rooks had established themselves time out of mind. Through the Park ran a little river, tortured at the bottom of the garden into a formal piece of water, and forced to abandon the wild glee with which it had previously murmured and rushed along; it was there confined within straight banks, and its bosom, as if in compensation for the liberty it had been deprived of, was covered with a rich growth of all varieties of the water-lily. For awhile, it submitted in peace and stillness, till escaping at the other end from the limits which confined it, it resumed its winding course with redoubled impetuosity and eagerness. By the side of this artificial lake was a green terrace, sheltered from the garden by a thick yew hedge, the growth of centuries; a few stone steps in the middle of the terrace led down to the water, and at either end stood a small

greenhouse, and an old fashioned summer-house, the lower part of which formed a boat-house, the upper, a room, with a window looking out over the Park, and a glass door opening on to the terrace, to which a flight of steps ran down.

I have dwelt long on the description of this place, for to me it is fraught with many and various associations ; and I love to linger among the familiar localities haunted by recollections of past joys and griefs now, as they were then, by phantoms of the great deeds and noble endurances of those who had lived and rejoiced, or suffered and mourned there, in other and more stirring times.

It was in itself altogether a most suggestive place ; still more so when looked at in connection with the history of its owners. The air of antiquity and half dilapidation that hung around it, accorded well with their present diminished fortunes, and excited a mixed feeling of sorrow for the decay of their greatness, and pride in the cause of that decay. Doubtless, all these combinations had been instrumental in forming the character of the present master of the Grange.

There was in that a similar repose, as of a spirit softened and subdued by misfortune,

joined to a loftiness and almost pride of bearing, as of one ready to sacrifice, and endure, and do all that his ancestors had done, and perhaps more, in a great and worthy cause.

To me, it was always a pleasure to sit and watch the expression of Mr. Annesley's countenance, whether in conversation with my father at our own house, or in the library of the Grange, where either with my father, or Amy and Miss Fleming, I used to go most days. I would then quietly take the book he had laid aside for me, with notes inserted as guides and helps through any difficulties it might contain, and subsiding into the deep window-seat, study alternately the book and his face as he talked, or sate alone at the table, immersed in books and papers, and occasionally sending a glance of kindness in my direction.

Then, when at liberty, he would come to my retreat, and discuss with me the subject of my study, of the literary part that is, drawing out my own thoughts and opinions quietly, explaining what was perplexing, correcting what was wrong, smoothing the difficulties, and leading me to love and wish to emulate all that was high and noble, insensibly raising the tone of

my mind, and filling my heart with aspirations after the grand and the beautiful ; and still through all might be recognised the aim, felt though hardly expressed, " And yet shew I to thee a more excellent way."

Learning was truly a pleasure when he was thus my Guide, and even languages I was able to master with wonderful ease and rapidity ; for into these he infused an interest, by setting before me an object greater than the mere acquisition of the languages alone ; it was for the sake of the treasures such a key would unlock, and of which he had already given me glimpses, that the difficulties were to be overcome.

" You will spoil that child, Ralph," I one day heard my father say to him. He had been as usual listening to, and patiently solving my perplexities and questions, and now they had left the library, in the oriel window of which I still sate, my book on my knee, and my head supported by my hands, and were walking up and down the velvet-like turf beneath in the warm sunshine. " You will spoil that child, and yet I believe you are the only one who can induce her to learn."

" There are some minds which must have an

object beyond the mere learning," was Mr. Annesley's reply, "I would not spoil Mabel, nor do I think it would be easy to do it; but she would never learn for mere shew or applause, it is only as a step to a higher end that she would study."

"Miss Fleming, at least, can do nothing with her," my father replied, with a sigh, "but, perhaps, Amy's cleverness makes Mabel's dullness more obvious."

"Mabel is not dull," Mr. Annesley said, "though not what is called clever; but she has patience, which," he added, smiling, "in her case, like virtue, will bring its own reward. Her mind is like a young holly; there is the stuff in it which time, and good culture, will mature into a strong serviceable wood; but perhaps she will never be brilliant, though I don't altogether despair of seeing her throw out the glossy foliage and bright berries which belong to the tree, and which Amy is already decked in."

"Dear Amy!" sighed my father, "yes, she is something to be proud of."

"Amy is like the maple," continued my champion, "to follow out my comparison; she

shews more striking blossoms, and her berries look as brilliant ; but the wood is not so sound, and the fruit soon withers ; depend upon it, Mabel is the tree that will be valued for use and ornament in the wintry days when Amy's blossoms and berries have dropt off."

He looked up as he ended, and, meeting my eyes earnestly fixed on him, to the neglect of my studies, he gave me a gay smile and a nod, and he and my father turned into the shrubbery that led to the garden.

I was quite a child then ; his absences grew longer as I grew older ; and, though the books were still set aside for me on a particular shelf, arranged as formerly with ample notes for my guidance, my studies were continued in solitude ; but not the less did I delight in the occupation, and my accustomed seat in the stone-mullioned oriel window. I could create a world of my own as the evening shadows closed down gradually into darkness, and I sate there, listening to the hooting of the owls, to the whispering and moaning of the wind along the winding stone passages, and the tapping of the loose trailers against the diamond-paned window ; marking the lights and shadows that they threw

upon the polished and carved surfaces of the old oak furniture, and the bats flitting silently past the window.

I indulged then in marvellous day-dreams, while a shiver would creep over me half of awe and half of a strange kind of enjoyment. I peopled the room with those who had played their parts in the ancient history of the family ; gallant knights and stately dames, rustled in and out at my will, and told their tales, or acted their deeds as my call summoned them from "the vasty deep."

And in all, I did not fail to trace the manly and well known features of their present representative, whose lips seemed ever ready to repeat the words of the chivalrous Francis, "Madam, we have lost all except our honour !"

It was not, however, without self-reproach that these dreams were indulged in : Mr. Annesley was neither ignorant of the tendency, nor of the danger of yielding to it. "Beware of dreaming, Mabel," he had said more than once, when he had found me giving way to the pleasure. "Cultivate imagination as much as you like, so long as it is accompanied by earnestness of purpose ; but mere aimless reverie will only

weaken that. One who indulges in dreams, looks at a picture and admires it—no more; imagination, stimulated by earnest purpose, induces him to admire and also try to imitate.”

So, dear as my day-dreams were, I resolutely but gradually put them away; and, as I read the records of the house, and looked at the portraits of those whose deeds were written there, and examined the armour in the hall which those heroes had worn—I set myself vigorously to conquer my natural inclination to indolence and reverie, so that, should trial be my lot, I might be able to emulate the pictures set before me, instead of only idly admiring the strength and self-sacrifice of their originals; that in short, “when the occasion should come, I might be ready for the occasion.”

But for the present, all that was required of me in the heroic line, was to stand by and see Amy loved and praised, and hear myself stigmatized as cold and dull, when my heart all the while was yearning for, and overflowing with love; and I felt conscious of powers which timidity and want of encouragement alone repressed.

Well, there was some degree of heroism in

this, though perhaps mixed with a strong alloy of pride, some heroism in enduring this without suffering my love for my father or sister to be clouded by resentment or envy.

But I am afraid I am even now visiting dreamland more than is either good for myself or conducive to the straight progress of this story, which I have certainly run in advance of, since I left it standing at the first departure of Mr. Annesley—an event of which child as I was at the time, I have even now a most vivid remembrance—and the anticipated arrival of a new neighbour at the Knoll. I believe it was this latter circumstance which led to a little alteration in our family arrangements.

It was shortly after the visit to Arden House, spoken of in the last chapter that, as my trusty henchman, Jem, was helping me late one evening, to plant some choice roots given me that day by Fenton, I involuntarily heard parts of a conversation between Mrs. Mainwaring, who had been drinking tea with us, and my father, as they walked in the garden.

“My dear Mr. Willoughby,” I heard her say, in reply to some previous remark of my father’s, “but you must remember that Amy is growing

up fast, and a sweet girl she is, too, and not only will she wish, but it will be absolutely necessary for her to go more into society."

My father sighed deeply, as he answered, "Poor Amy! surely she is young to think of society yet, Mrs. Mainwaring. Let me see, hardly seventeen, I think; what can she want beyond Miss Fleming and home at present?"

Mrs. Mainwaring laughed. "At seventeen," she said, "girls were apt to think of something more than a governess, and besides," she went on, "Amy has the manner of an older person, and now that Mrs. Aubrey is coming into the neighbourhood—"

What argument was hung on to Mrs. Aubrey's name, I did not hear; but, as they approached again, Mrs. Mainwaring was saying,

"Surely a governess might be dispensed with now; Amy is sufficiently educated; and, as to Mabel, she will never—"

Another break occurred; and, as they passed once more my father said, "I know of no one but my sister, Mrs. Stanley; she has been a widow some years, and, having no children of her own, only a step-daughter—"

"She would be the very person," Mrs. Main-

waring interrupted, "that step-daughter is indendant of her I believe, and has other relations, and then Amy will soon be old enough to manage the house alone."

"Well, I will write," said my father, with a sigh, yielding as most people did to Mrs. Mainwaring's arguments; but the accent was that of one painfully aroused from a life of study and retirement, to the fact that he is required to take an active part in the battle of life around him. Perhaps, too, that sigh might have been connected with the thought of one who would have relieved him from all these anxieties, and rendered the interference of a Mrs. Mainwaring needless; perhaps, it was merely wafted to the memory of a happiness he had known, and of which he had been so soon deprived.

At all events, it seemed to terminate both the conversation and the walk, and I was left to my planting and my cogitations, which led me to wonder what could be Mrs. Mainwaring's object in thus meddling in our domestic life, and why she should wish to eject poor harmless Miss Fleming from a comfortable home.

At the time, I could supply no motive beyond the love of management, and the pleasure of

being able to say, "Poor Mr. Willoughby would be quite at a loss how to manage those girls, if I were not at hand to help him!"

Some time later, I found another reason for the motive, when it was said that Miss Fleming had got a situation in Dean Winthrop's family at Winterford, through kind Mrs. Mainwaring's recommendation, and that Mrs. Winthrop felt herself so indebted to her dear friend for having supplied her with such an invaluable governess, who had educated that clever, pretty Miss Willoughby.

Just then, however, I felt only sorrow for Miss Fleming, though she had been no great friend to me; but I have always had a foolish habit of clinging to accustomed objects, and I thought Mrs. Mainwaring had acted treacherously towards her. The result only proved that I had been judging before the time.

But, while condemning others, I forgot that I had been laying *myself* open to blame, a case not unfrequent with such self-constituted censors, and my lucubrations were brought to a sudden stand by the light touch of Amy's hand on my shoulder, as she exclaimed in a laughing, half reproachful tone :

"Gardening without gloves, Mabel? When will you learn to mind these things? Just look at your hands!"

I felt at once conscience-stricken as I regarded the offending members, begrimed as they were, and glanced penitentially from them to the bright face which hung over me; for frequent had been the lectures received on this subject.

I was the more vexed, too, because it was but a minute before that I had laid aside my gloves for the greater facility of tying up a drooping branch of picotees, and had only neglected to resume them because Jem had at the moment presented himself with a large root of *Diclytra spectabilis*, all ready for immersion.

Penitently, therefore, I met Amy's laughing eyes, as she stooped and kissed me, while she said playfully,

"You are incorrigible, Mabel; pity Mr. Annesley never undertook to improve your manners as well as your mind."

CHAPTER IV.

“ Let us rest awhile

By this clear pool, where in the shadow flung

From alder boughs and osiers o’er its breast

The soft red of the flowering willow-herb

So vividly is pictured.”

MRS. HEMANS.

“ And she felt for a moment

That, like the Indian maid, she too was pursuing a phantom.”

EVANGELINE.

MRS. MAINWARING’S suggestion was adopted, and my aunt invited ; and, soon after her arrival, Miss Fleming left us, as Amy was not only considered finished herself, but quite competent to complete my education. No doubt she was, had the inclination kept pace with the ability ; but she was too much elated at her own emancipation from the school-room to immure herself in it voluntarily on my account ; so, though a sort of formal attention to its duties was kept up for a time, the spirit soon eva-

porated, and I found myself with only greater liberty to pursue my own line of study at the Grange.

My aunt coincided with the received family opinion, that I was an odd child, and being thus, by universal acclaim, voted unnecessary, I was left to pursue my own devices.

Mrs. Aubrey soon became popular in the neighbourhood ; Mrs. Mainwaring formed a close alliance with her ; the combined attractions of a new patronage, and that one nearly connected with nobility, were too striking to be overlooked.

At first, she tried to make a pet of Clarence Aubrey, but, finding him rather unwilling to become a squire of elderly dames, she abandoned the attempt, and contented herself with spreading the praises of her "dear friend, Mrs. Aubrey's charming son."

For a time, indeed, the current of Mrs. Mainwaring's affections set so strongly in the direction of the Knoll, that we of the Rectory, found ourselves altogether in the north of her ladyship's opinion, which at first caused us some perplexity, till a clearer view of the matter shewed that we were but temporarily laid aside,

to be resumed again when the novelty of a fresh acquaintance had subsided.

In the meantime, an intimacy sprang up between the families at the Knoll and the Rectory, more particularly between the junior members, and Clarence generally lounged away a portion of his day with us.

I remember one morning about a month after their arrival, as we were seated at our usual employments, hearing the voice of Clarence at the window, challenging us to a "day of idlesse."

"Miss Willoughby," he exclaimed, "how can you sit excruciating that unlucky piece of muslin, while the sun is lighting up the world so gaily out of doors ; does it not make you long to bask in his beams ?"

"Ah, Mr. Aubrey," was Amy's laughing reply, "you are only like the idle little boy in the story, you want to play yourself, and would have every one else idle, too, in order to play with you."

"And you, I suppose, are like the cross bee, who gave the innocent youth such a stinging rejoinder," Clarence said, "but you are wrong, Miss Willoughby ; don't you see that far from

being idle, I am on piscatory thoughts intent, and want you all to bear me company."

"Just as I said," Amy persisted, shaking her sunny curls at him.

"And you mean seriously to affirm that you are going to fish this morning, Mr. Aubrey?" I remarked, "what would the 'gentle Isaac,' say to the attempt under this bright sky?"

"He would say, Miss Mabel, that you shew great ignorance of the craft, not to know that the expert and accomplished fisherman hath flies suited to all states of the atmosphere, and that a true brother of the angle doth not wholly depend on the sport for his amusement, but hath wherewithal to console him when the fish are so perverse as not to 'come and be caught.' Look here!" he exclaimed, holding up a book.

"Well, it is not to be denied that you are a skilful angler, Mr. Aubrey," said Amy with a laugh, "that last bait has already effectually caught one of our party."

"It will be about the only fish you will catch to-day," my aunt observed, "that is, if you purpose reading to us, for I suppose you are not providing for your own amusement solely,

though I never heard that the finny tribe were attracted by the human voice."

"That, at least, means that my invitation is to be considered Mrs. Stanley: thank you for the half concession," Clarence replied, placing his hand on the low window-sill, and vaulting into the room. "Now I will own that this paraphernalia is all a sham, and that I am only bent on luring you all to spend the noontide hours under the Scotch firs which overhang the brawling Arden in the Grange Park. Bring your work or drawings, or what you will; and, while pretending to whip the water, I will tickle your ears in reality with some of our favourite authors."

"And, meanwhile, we shall become food for midges, and such small deer," Amy objected.

"But, Mr. Aubrey," interposed Aunt Martha, "what will the keeper say to your even pretending to whip the water as you say, within the Manor of Beechley?"

"Whatever amuses and pleases himself," Clarence said, "seeing I have his master's permission to catch the fish, shoot the game, or do what I like at the Grange."

"Except to meddle with the garden, or poach

upon the library," Amy said, "those are made over to Mabel; and, whatever Mr. Annesley may be, she is a strict preserver, I assure you, Mr. Aubrey."

"And you know Mr. Annesley? is it possible?" I exclaimed.

"Mabel thinks Mr. Annesley as much her own property as his books and flowers," Amy said laughing.

"I fear she will find many ready to dispute the possession," replied Clarence, "Mr. Annesley is a favourite with all who know him, to say nothing of the fair Edith Marsh, whose claim, you know, is paramount as the—." He paused for a moment, as if the word did not readily present itself, and as I, by an uncontrollable impulse, looked up quickly, I met his eye, and the colour rushed into my face. I tried to think of something to say, but words would not come at my will, and it was a relief to hear Amy break the momentary silence by saying,

"Well, I at least shall not enter my name on the list of his devoted; indeed, I think him slightly a bore; and, as I believe he returns the compliment, there is no love lost between us; but where did you meet Mr. Aubrey?"

Clarence did not answer for a minute, and then it was with a little start that he replied,

“ Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Willoughby ; where, did you ask ? Down in Cornwall, my uncle and Ruth were there all last winter : he fancied her delicate, for you must know he is full of fancies about her, so he asked my mother to go down and help him to shield her fair cheek from the too rough wooing of the wind, and there we met the Annesleys and Edith Marsh. Miss Annesley, you know, dreads the East winds of our coast in the winter, so her brother has bought her a place down there, and made it into an enchanted palace.”

“ And leaves the poor old Grange untouched, with its furniture as antique as the walls themselves,” said Amy.

“ He is so little here, that I suppose he is indifferent to the place,” my aunt observed.

“ On the contrary,” Clarence replied, “ he speaks of it with the greatest fondness, and says the desire of his life is to restore it to what it was in its best days, and make it his home ; but other things interfere at present ; however, surely we can discuss these matters as well on the banks of the Arden as here, Mrs. Stanley,

and pray remember the fish I am bound to provide for dinner to-day."

We all laughed at the assumed earnestness of his manner ; and, yielding as much to the enticing aspect of the day as to his entreaties, we each provided what was most useful to us, and soon found ourselves seated beneath the group of Scotch firs in the Park.

It was a lovely spot. The little brawling, dark-coloured river, ran at some depth below, making rather a sharp angle at that point, and foamed and fretted with a lulling musical sound, over the various obstacles which obstructed it, or lay in deep still pools reflecting the osier-fringed bank on the other side ; a fern-covered hill crowned with noble beeches, rose gently from the Knoll on which firs stood, forming a sheltering background ; and, from the opposite side, stretched away a varied and undulating landscape. The grand old trees, under which we sate, threw a quivering shade on the ground and the water, and their fallen spines made a deliciously aromatic carpet.

For a time, I followed the words which Clarence was reading, but by degrees the sense began to escape me, as my mind fixed itself upon

what he had previously been saying, and tried to unravel the meaning.

This Edith Marsh, who was she? and why had I never heard of her before? What could she be to Mr. Annesley? and why had he been so silent about her? Was she in any way the cause of that expression of deep sadness I had so often seen on his countenance? And why should he surround her and his sister with elegance and luxury, and neglect the Grange?

Perhaps poverty might be one of those motives that interfered with more than one desire of his life. It might be that she was poor, possibly his sister's companion; no doubt she was beautiful, talented—an accomplished musician. I drew a mental picture of a queen-like beauty, tall, stately, fit to reign in that fine old mansion. It was a long time since Miss Annesley had been there, but she was alone then.

I remembered Mr. Annesley's passionate love of music, and the air of abstraction with which he would often listen to what was played or sung. Those must have been Edith's favourite pieces. I recollected one day finding a volume of 'Tasso' on the table, not laid out for me: he had been reading it himself: it was a volume of his minor

pieces, his *Rime*. I was deep in some of the sweet sonnets to Leonora, when he came in ; and, looking over my shoulder, he pointed to one, and asked me to read it aloud ; he stood beside me for a minute, and then walked to the window and remained gazing absently into the garden long after I had finished the sonnet, and had gone on reading to myself.

All at once he heaved a deep sigh ; and, turning round with one of his sweet smiles, apologized for his inattention. “Your voice carried me away from the present, Mabel,” he said, “back to the past, then on to the future, and there I lost myself.” Could the sonnet have brought Edith to his mind, or was it some resemblance in the tone of my voice which had led him to look so sadly onward ? I was in a maze of thought, utterly lost to everything around me. If I could but assist the kind friend who had been such a help to me. Oh ! that I had wealth to lay at his feet, if the want of it were indeed an obstacle to his wishes.

Suddenly a thought occurred to me ; I had money of my own, independant of my father, a legacy of £4,000 left me by my godfather. I recollected being told so by my father, and

his saying it should be placed somewhere or other to accumulate till I was of age. But was I entitled to it now—would he let me have it now? Could I in any way give it to Mr. Annesley? To my childish mind, the difficulty did not seem great, and the sum enormous. I wondered how much it would produce, for I had some notion that an income was to be made out of it, but it was a calculation utterly beyond me. I had covered my face with my hands while these thoughts had been running through my mind. All at once, as the last idea struck me, I raised my head.

“Auntie,” I said, “what income would £4,000 make?”

They all burst into fits of laughter, I must have looked as I felt, so very earnest; Clarence threw himself back in a paroxysm of uncontrollable mirth. I looked from one to the other bewildered for a moment; presently the absurdity of the whole thing burst upon me, and I, too, joined in the laugh. I had upset and smashed my basket of glass by trying to throw my money-bags at Mr. Annesley’s feet.

“Oh, Mabel! what an anticlimax!” Amy exclaimed as soon as she could find voice,

"and just when Mr. Aubrey was in the midst of one of the sweetest allegories in *Hyperion*!"

"What a blow to my vanity, too!" Clarence went on, "first I saw Miss Mabel's wrapt expression, presently the work fell from her hands, then her face was buried in them, momentarily I expected a crisis of overwrought feeling, and was thinking how the honours were to be divided between the author and his interpreter, when out blurts a question of *£. s. d.*!" and again he threw himself back with a shout of laughter.

"My dear Mabel," said Aunt Martha, "your very prosaic question has indeed found me quite unprepared; I must collect my thoughts before I can answer it."

"Oh pray don't, dear auntie!" I exclaimed, "I am dreadfully ashamed of myself, and beg you will not answer my foolish question. A thousand pardons of you and of Longfellow, too, if he were indeed the author you have been reading, Mr. Aubrey. I wish I could think of some appropriate compliment, but indeed my thoughts had wandered."

"No need to tell us that, Mabel," my aunt

said with a merry smile, "we cannot doubt it."

"And Mabel, of all the world, to commit such a solecism!" exclaimed Amy, "had it been a plain, unpoetical soul like myself, there would have been no marvel. It can only be concluded that Mr. Annesley alone has power to command Mabel's attention: pity he is so far away."

"And has taken his mantle with him," added Clarence.

"Well, at all events Mabel has effectually dissipated our romance," Aunt Martha remarked, as she began to gather her work together, "so I think we had better break up this pleasant camp and turn homewards. You will come and dine with us, Mr. Aubrey, I trust, though not on the fish you led us to hope for," she added laughing, "that is, if your absence will not cause uneasiness at home."

The invitation was willingly accepted. "His mother was too much accustomed to his irregularities," he said, "to be anxious on account of his non-appearance." Amy promised him some music in the evening, in return for his reading, provided he did not fall into a train

of thought, and interrupt the harmony as I had done.

"There was no fear of that," he answered, "he was no Ulysses to stuff his ears with cotton, or suffer anything to distract his attention while such syrens were singing." We all laughed heartily at the hyperbole of the boyish compliment, and engaged in such light conversation, we walked slowly towards home.

But it was long before I was suffered to hear the last of my ill-timed question. My father was told of it after dinner, and gravely requested to solve my difficulty if he could. He was as much amused as the rest had been, and said he began to think he had made a mistake, and that Annesley was right after all. "You should have studied algebra, and gone to Winterford College with Philip, my girl," he said, "and in time you might have become a female Newton : who knows ?"

From that time, I was often called Sir Isaac ; but my question was never answered, nor did I venture to propound it again, and was only glad to be spared the further ridicule which would have attached to me, had the previous train of my thoughts been known.

CHAPTER V.

Without—the world's unceasing noises rise,
Turmoil, disquietude and busy fears.
Within—there are the sounds of other years,
Thoughts full of prayer, and solemn harmonies,
Which imitate on earth the peaceful skies,
And canonize regret, which backward bears
Her longing aspect, moving thoughtful tears."

THE CATHEDRAL.

TIME slipped by very quietly for many weeks, so quietly that we were hardly aware of his progress. In spite of some few drawbacks, we were a happy party, and Aunt Martha had done much to soften down the little asperities which Miss Fleming's method of exciting emulation had sown, and want of heart discipline had fostered, between Amy and myself.

She was a gentle, sweet-tempered woman; her husband had been a man of selfish and recklessly extravagant habits, which, before his

death, had reduced them both to great poverty. That event had placed her in comfortable circumstances again, but the sorrow had purified and elevated her character, the furnace of affliction had separated the dross from the pure ore, in which much of the great Refiner's image was already reflected. She was always cheerful, and had the art of gaining the affections and confidence of young people, though she had no children of her own. She was more disposed to be lenient in her judgment of me than Miss Fleming; the want of ability, and the peculiarities which had annoyed the professional eye of the latter, were deemed of little import by my aunt. In her opinion, the education of the heart was more necessary than that of the mind, and her gentle influence did much towards raising me from the pariah condition in the family into which I had sunk.

During the day, we did not see much of my father, for he was a good deal in his study; and it was only when occupied in the parish that Amy or I were ever his companions till the evening, when we met in the comfortable drawing-room, which I can see before me now; long and low, terminating in a bay window, clustered around

with sweet creepers, and opening on to a small lawn bordered by shrubs, while on one side of the room was a French window, in a recess so deep as almost to form a separate apartment, and which, when in winter the fire diffused its warm glow through the other part of the room, was generally curtained off from it.

Towards the end of August, a break was caused in the pleasant monotony of our daily life, by an announcement that the Bishop would hold a confirmation at Arden Rise.

It was the first time our village had enjoyed the privilege, for lying as it did within a few miles of the Cathedral town of Winterford, it had hitherto, like a dutiful child, sent its candidates up to the mother church.

Now, however, a new arrangement had been made, and the day was looked forward to as a solemn, and at the same time, a joyous festival; and during the intervening time, of course, my father's work was much increased, as there were many of his parishioners to be confirmed; among them Amy and myself; for, though the former was now seventeen, circumstances had hitherto prevented it. There were also preparations of a secular kind, which fell to my aunt's

share ; and, as the Bishop with many others would lunch at the Rectory, these were not to be lightly regarded.

They involved the necessity of a day's shopping in Winterford, which in itself was quite an event to us. I doubt if, on this occasion, we young ones were anything but a drawback to Aunt Martha, as she sate in solemn conclave with Mr. Honeywood, in the parlour behind the shop of the latter, balancing the respective merits of *pâtés* and jellies ; but we were decidedly more equal to the discussion which followed, at Miss Gingham's the dressmaker's, on the more interesting subject to us, of costume ; and we entered fully into the proposal of Clarence, who was of our party, that the business of the day being happily ended, the remainder should be devoted to pleasure and spent in the Cathedral till the train summoned us to return to Arden Rise.

It was the first time I had been within the building since I was too young to feel the beauty of it, for, as I have said, a journey to Winterford was a rare occurrence to us ; and never shall I forget the sensation of awe and pleasure combined, which thrilled through me as we entered the nave, and looking up at the

long rows of clustered columns rising so majestically to the lofty fretted roof, caught a glimpse over the richly wrought screen of the glories of the eastern window beyond. I longed to throw myself upon my knees, the solemnity of the building oppressed me, and a deep sigh was the only relief I could give to the feelings which overpowered me. I was leaning on Clarence's arm, my aunt and Amy were in advance ; and, as I stopped involuntarily, he must have felt my hand tremble, for looking down into my face, he said,

" You are ill, Mabel ; how pale you look ! The change from the hot street into the cold church has been too much for you."

" No," I whispered, " I am not ill ;" and then, after a moment's pause, I exclaimed in the same tone, " How dreadful is this place ! surely this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven !"

Clarence seemed to respect my feelings if he did not quite share them, for he pressed my arm to his side in silence, and we moved slowly on.

The congregation was assembling for evening-prayers ; and, following the few individuals who

composed it, we too went forward and took our places in the choir. The beautiful harmony of the architecture and the service soothed my feelings, and I was able to join in the opening prayers till the first notes of the organ rose gently, gradually swelling on till its full tones peeled forth, rolling along the lofty roof of the beautiful building, and reverberating from the side chapels and aisles ; and then utterly overpowered, I sank upon my knees, and laying my head on the desk before me, yielded to the tears that would not be longer repressed. After a time, I became calmer, but I remained in the same posture till the service was over, not joining in it, only repeating to myself, " Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

I believe my aunt understood me, for she did not disturb me, only when the prayers were ended, and the choir nearly empty, she touched me gently, and rising, I followed her into the nave. One of the vergers came up and asked if we would like to go over the Cathedral? Aunt Martha looked at us, and, seeing the wish in Amy's face, at once acceded to it, and they followed the guide.

" And will you not come, too, Mabel?"

Clarence asked, as he saw me turn away from the rest.

"No," I said, "I was not in a mood for details, I must first try and accustom myself to the grand whole."

"Then you shall not remain alone," he said, kindly, "I can see it any day, so now I will stay with you."

I begged him not to remain ; I wished to be alone and silent, to see nothing but the vast vault around me, and try to understand its greatness. After a little remonstrance, therefore, Clarence saw that I really preferred solitude ; so, giving way to my wishes, he followed the others.

I seated myself at the base of one of the stately pillars, and abandoned myself to thought.

There was plenty of time, for the party was long absent, though to me it seemed but a short interval, so many thoughts surged over my mind.

The building occupied me first ; I fancied the idea of erecting such a structure, gradually dawning upon the mind of the founder, and wondered what had first stimulated him to the

undertaking. It could hardly have been pride, I thought ; but, if such an element had mingled with the intention, how effectually it must have been quelled, as bit by bit the vastness and grandeur of the edifice grew upon him, and he came to see that his own life, and that of many after him, would not suffice to carry out the design to its full extent !

I wondered whether the workmen employed were impressed with the nature of the work they were engaged in, whether it had affected their lives. I thought of the changes those steadfast walls had looked down upon ; of those who had received baptism there, and, after struggling through a life prolonged, perhaps, to the utmost extent allowed to man, had been laid beneath its stones ; generation after generation, and yet they remained firm and strong as on the day the mason's scaffolding had been first removed.

Then I was led on to think how small a space these long ages occupied in eternity, and that thought brought me back to my own individuality, to the remembrance at once of my own helplessness, and the awful power and great tenderness of that Hand which was guiding me

step by step through life, and on which I had, often so unconsciously, leaned.

I thought of my mother's death, and wondered whether she were permitted to watch over me, whether she were near me then, whether she would be so when I should take upon myself the vows which she had heard others make for me at the font. This led me to think of my confirmation, of the fearful responsibility which had been thrust upon me, as it were, in infancy, which struggle against or repudiate as I would, could in no way be shaken off, and which, in a few days, I was so solemnly to assume voluntarily. Voluntarily ! I dwelt upon the word ; was it really so ? or was it merely as a matter of course, or because others told me to do so, and without thought, that I was about take this great responsibility upon myself ? Was I really willing to enlist under a banner which held out no prospect of earthly reward, but, on the contrary, required its followers to endure hardness, to fight, to suffer to the last ?

The thought occupied me long ; hitherto, I had been, as it were, but learning the drill and duty of a soldier ; now I was to take my place in the ranks, to enter into the life-long warfare,

never to put off my armour, never to sleep upon my post, never to fly ; to help those who were fighting around and beside me to the utmost of my power, and to remember that upon my cowardice, relaxed vigilance, treachery, or faithfulness and courage, might depend much of the failure or success of my comrades in the battle.

“Who is equal to these things?” was my mental ejaculation, but then came remembrance of the armoury where we might equip ourselves with all that was needful for us, and the idea connected itself in some strange way with the occupations of the morning, as our thoughts will sometimes fly from one extreme to another, from the sublime to the ridiculous, and a vision of muslin dresses, and the comparative advantages of tucks and flounces, fading off into an array of raised pies and jellies came before me ; so that, unable to link together again the broken chain of my former meditations, I rose, and going out into the south porch, sate down to wait till the rest of the party, having accomplished the survey of the Cathedral, should join me.

Since then I have seen many cathedrals at

home and abroad, most of them finer in an architectural point of view, than that of Winterford, some of them gorgeous in their grandeur; but, though I could never enter the humblest of such buildings without a deep thrill of awe, and a thorough appreciation of its beautiful adaptation to the holy purpose it is intended for, no magnificence could ever produce a more overwhelming sense of the Majesty of Him, in whose honour it was raised, than I experienced that day in my first visit to Winterford.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Arch, volatile and sportive bird,
By social glee inspired ;
Ambitious to be seen and heard,
And pleased to be admired !”

WORDSWORTH.

“ Pour connaître toute sa force, l’homme a besoin d’avoir
à combattre quelque chose d’un peu impossible à vaincre.”

VOYAGE AUTOUR DE MON JARDIN.

ON the day before the confirmation, Amy and I busied ourselves in weaving floral decorations for the church, in all appropriate devices. Clarence, of course, was our aide-de-camp, and we had, besides, a considerable staff of school-children, whose business it was to bring flowers from the gardens of the Knoll, Arden House, the Grange and the Rectory, as well as those of the villagers. The day’s work was just

completed, and the last basketfull of litter removed, when the bell rang out for the evening-service; and, as the people came to their accustomed places, we were rewarded for our labours by seeing many a glance of admiration at the result produced. The effect was, in truth, very beautiful; the flowers, which were exclusively white, contrasted well with the dark oak carved work; and, as the slanting beams of the setting sun struggled through the stained windows, they fell upon a floral cross, or a garland, or a text illuminated upon the wall, lighting each up as with a glory, while the church was filled with the fragrance of fresh flowers.

At the conclusion of the prayers, the village-children clustered in the porch, their faces beaming with pleasure as my father said,

“ You have worked well, my children; may you remember this day’s work, and the one for which it is a preparation, all your lives, and be equally ready throughout to spend your time and all that is yours in God’s service !”

There was a hushed murmur of satisfaction among the little group; and then those who

were to be confirmed next day, followed to the Rectory for their tickets.

Aunt Martha was with us in the morning, as we went into the church to see that all was in order; and, just as she was saying that she trusted this preparation was but symbolical of that of our hearts, which she hoped we had been seeking to decorate with flowers of holiness that would not wither, but would in time become fruit, the bells rang out a joyous peal, announcing the arrival of the Bishop, which made us hasten back to the Rectory to be in readiness to receive his Lordship and other guests who were expected.

It was a day of excitement throughout the usually quiet village. In the churchyard, various groups were assembled, parents and friends of those children who were coming from neighbouring parishes—the men in their English-looking smock-frocks, with a waistcoat of some gay colour peeping above it, the nearest approach to costume which remains to England—the women in neat holiday dresses; for our's was a very primitive part of the country, and women were content to wear clothes becoming and appropriate to the station in which God had

placed them, instead of cheap, flaunting imitations of the dress of the higher grades of society. The railroad had only recently found its way through our hills to deprive our valley of the seclusion it had hitherto enjoyed, and turn country lads and lasses into vulgar imitators of the ranks above them.

Some of the neighbouring clergy had also arrived with their little flocks of candidates, whom they were busily marshalling to their places. At home, we found several young girls of our own class with their parents; and, while my aunt did the honours to the latter in the drawing-room, Amy and I joined the younger group clustered round the French window. Among the strangers was a family named Forster, who had not been long in the county. Mr. Forster had been in trade, in which he had rapidly amassed a large fortune, and had recently purchased an estate called Bracken-hurst, formerly belonging to the Annesley family. He had several sons and daughters, all young, but it was only the eldest girl who had accompanied her mother that day, and who was now talking with Amy not far from where I stood.

"What a love of a place you have!" I heard her say; "how charming it must be to live in such a bower of roses and sweets! I wish papa would build us just such a cottage in the Park, one gets so tired of splendour and luxury," and she looked at Amy from head to foot, glancing superciliously from her simple dress of white muslin to her own flounced *glacé*.

"We are very proud of our garden," Amy replied, "at least Mabel is, for she is our gardener."

"Mabel," repeated Miss Forster, "that is your sister, I suppose, which is she?" and, as Amy pointed me out, she turned her eye-glass upon me with a scrutiny similar to that she had recently bestowed on Amy. "Your gardener?" she went on in an affected tone, "do you mean to say that she really works in the garden? Mamma would never let us do such a thing, for fear of making our hands coarse."

"I don't think Mabel's are coarse, nevertheless," Amy said quietly.

"Perhaps not," was the doubtful reply: "but what old fashioned sleeves you wear!" she exclaimed, after a moment's pause, "why don't

you wear sleeves like mine?" and she displayed her ruffles of rich lace open to the elbow.

"We should be afraid of making our arms coarse," Amy retaliated with assumed simplicity.

"Oh, but my arms are quite covered with bracelets, you see," Miss Forster answered, not at all baffled.

"True," was Amy's reply, "but, having no bracelets, our's would lack the covering."

"Oh!" ejaculated Miss Forster, with rather a mystified air; the idea of wanting such ornaments had apparently never entered her head, and she twisted, and examined, and played with the massive chains which encircled her own arms, as if revolving the subject in her mind; then, as Amy turned to speak to some one else, she came up to the window near which I was standing with Clarence Aubrey.

"Your sister tells me that you really work in the garden," she remarked in a patronizing tone, addressing me, though her eyes were fixed upon Clarence, as she added, "This is your brother, I suppose?"

I replied in the negative, at the same time introducing Clarence.

"But you have a brother?" she persisted.

I explained, to the amusement of Clarence, who having acknowledged the somewhat awkward recognition she made him, stood by, taking all in, in silence.

"It must be terribly hard work, 'gardenings,'" Miss Forster remarked, "but I suppose you have lots of disagreeable things to do; in the parish, I mean."

I smiled. "We have plenty to occupy us," I said, "but we don't think it disagreeable, rather the reverse."

She raised her eyebrows, with a look of surprise and incredulity, as she went on,

"Mamma wouldn't let me do parish-work, which is fortunate, for I should hate it; she is afraid of infection in the cottages, and she says the school-room air would be poisonous."

"Poisonous to mind or body?" asked Clarence with simplicity.

"To both, I suppose," she answered with a grave stare, "but teaching must be horrid work, and what could I possibly teach such children?"

"To renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, perhaps," Clarence said, looking amused.

"Oh, that they have to do without my teaching," she answered, with a short laugh, as she arranged and admired her bracelets.

"Perhaps, Miss Forster thinks example better than precept," said a voice, whose low-toned musical accents made me turn round quickly, and I saw Mr. Annesley smiling down upon me.

I don't know how I accosted him, or what explanation, if any, he gave of his sudden appearance; for his return to the Grange was wholly unlooked-for at this moment. What passed during those first few minutes I cannot tell, for the surprise of seeing him deprived me of breath, and I could only listen to the familiar tones of his voice, without heeding the words that were uttered; till, after a time, I recovered from my astonishment, and heard him saying,

"This is the little friend you have so often heard me speak of, Edith."

The name at once recalled me to my senses, and I noticed a lovely girl leaning on his arm—lovely beyond expression I thought her at that moment, more like a houri than any other comparison I could form. Her complexion was brilliant in its fairness, with such a rich glow on

her cheeks, and in her full pouting lips. The S. Felix of Murillo, painted as the Spaniards say "con leche y sangre," rushed into my mind; surely this child, too, must have fed on roses, I thought. She had large sparkling hazel eyes, with a profusion of dark brown hair braided off her beautiful smooth low forehead; her figure was not tall, but perfect in its rounded symmetry, and her face full of smiles and animation. How different from the stately, somewhat sad and dependent being I had pictured to myself! How strangely at variance with the truth are our conceptions usually of persons, and even places we have not seen. I did not, however, make the reflection then; my mind was too much occupied with the young Hebe before me.

What my countenance expressed during the rapid glance which shewed me all that I have described, I cannot tell; probably the feelings were all too curiously mingled for any one to preponderate outwardly. I only felt that this was Edith Marsh, belonging in some mysterious way to Mr. Annesley, for mystery there must be, or why in all these years had he never dropped a hint to me of her existence?—that she was radiantly beautiful, and that she leaned

upon his arm, and gazed up into the eyes which smiled so tenderly on her again with entire confidence. And a sensation came over me as of one, who after struggling with the waves, has just succeeded painfully in obtaining a footing upon a rock, whence a rude hand flings him back again into the sullen, surging waters.

Something like their dull heavy sound seemed to prevent my hearing what was spoken ; and, when I again caught the words, Mr. Annesley was saying,

“Edith is a year or two older than yourself, Mabel ; but I hope that great disparity will not prevent your being friends.”

Edith was parting her beautiful lips to make some smiling remark to me as she extended her hand, when my aunt came out to bid us all follow into the church, whither the Bishop and my father had just gone. The interruption was opportune, for I know not how I should have returned Edith's greeting at that moment ; I felt so unaccountably bewildered, that I think she could not have received a very favourable impression of her whom Mr. Annesley had just called his friend. But my aunt's summons recalled me to the present ; and how unprepared I

found myself for the moment which I had been looking forward to with such awe! In an instant, all the feelings that I had been cherishing so carefully had become confused and turbid, and vain was my endeavour to clear them. I followed mechanically to the church; I tried to join in the service, but my attention was repeatedly wandering; and, though I made the responses, and when the time came, took my place with others and knelt in the chancel; though I felt the hands of the Bishop upon my head, and heard him repeat the solemn prayer, his voice sounded to my ears as if it came across a troubled sea, and all seemed like a dream. A sense of loneliness was in my heart; it was as if some heavy sorrow had just fallen upon me. It was in vain, in the confused state of my mind, that I tried to think whence it arose; I could fix upon nothing tangible; it was like one of those inexplicable forebodings which sometimes darken the soul, without any apparently adequate cause, as the slightest and thinnest summer-cloud will sometimes throw a broad shadow on the hill-side; and we look up and wonder at the filminess of the vapour which has caused it.

I tried to listen to the solemn charge ; but, though I compelled my wandering thoughts occasionally to fix themselves upon it, very soon they had escaped again.

To those who know not what to a loving warm heart it is to feel itself the unloved one, my distress will appear as a summer-cloud indeed ; but doubtless there are many who will be able to comprehend the feeling. Misunderstood at home, I had clung to Mr. Annesley as one who had always befriended me, and unreasonable as it was, perhaps, it wounded me strangely to discover that all the kindness he had shewn, and the pains he had bestowed were merely the result of compassion for my ignorant and isolated state. Without, indeed, absolutely thinking at all, I had come to consider him as peculiarly my own property ; and now I found that not only I had been talked over, but that probably all the circumstances connected with me were known to one of whose existence even, I had only recently heard by accident, and whom Mr. Annesley had not so much as ever named to me. I can see now that jealousy was the passion which so troubled the clear waters of my mind, but then I did not understand

this, and a feeling of utter loneliness and deep depression was all that I was conscious of.

I stole away from the party, as we returned to the house, and went up into my own room, from the window of which I looked down upon the groups that were laughing and chatting so gaily in the garden.

"To be the first object to no one;—uncared for!" I said mentally, "and to have a heart so full of love, so yearning for affection!"

It seemed very desolate at that moment; all the sunlight had faded, and the gay colouring of life's landscape had changed into a dull grey neutral tint. I could not then see the selfishness that lurked under the name of yearnings for affection, nor the morbid state of mind which had thrown this dull hue over my future—I only heard the silvery tone of Edith's merry laugh as she tripped down the steps from the drawing-room—I only saw Mr. Annesley turn at the sound, and throw one of those tender, beaming smiles upon her, and I felt, I am afraid, like the serpent in Paradise.

The next moment, too, I saw my father go up to Amy, and, with a look of proud affection,

draw her arm within his, and lead her up to the Bishop, who smiled, and took her hand, as he said something inaudible to me; and, while Amy looked up into my father's face, the latter bent and kissed her forehead fondly. No one seemed to think of me; and, with a heart full of bitter, but undefined feelings, I left the window, and sitting down by the bedside, rested my head upon it, and tried to reconcile myself to the idea of a life of loneliness.

I was just beginning to see a faint dawning of the truth, that selfishness alone can produce utter loneliness, and to question myself as to how much of my own isolation had proceeded from faults of temper, faults of manner, and an aptitude to magnify the first person singular, when my meditations were broken by a light tap at the door, and a sweet voice, which inquired, "May I come in?"

I rose, opened it, and there stood Edith Marsh.

"Why do you stay here, all alone?" she asked, "and why do you look so sad? Ah, I see, you have been thinking of the beautiful service which is just over."

I felt the colour mount into my face, as I tried to disclaim the involuntary hypocrisy but she went on, without listening,

“I remember my own confirmation, two years ago; Mr. Annesley took so much pains with me, he used to talk so kindly, and give me so much help and encouragement; and I remember the solemn and earnest thoughts I had during the service, though I fear they did not last long,” she added, laughing. “Well, I hope we shall be friends, for he wishes it, and then, perhaps, you will let me tell you what he used to say, if I can, that is;—but we must not stop now, for he sent me to find and ask you to come down stairs. Ah! now you smile!” she went on, as, like a ray of sunlight piercing the thick mist which had gathered round my heart, came the idea that I had not been entirely unthought of.

“And did Mr. Annesley really send you in search of me, Miss Marsh?” I began, “how kind—”

“Call me Edith,” she interrupted, “every one that I love does so, and I have heard so much of Mabel, and have had her so often held up to me as a mirror wherein to compare my

own defects with her merits, that I could never call you by any other name."

"In that case I fear, Bugaboo would be a more appropriate name," I said, laughing outright; "but, at all events, the mirror must have been a magic one indeed, if it showed any merits in me."

"Mr. Annesley does not think so," replied Edith, "he is always praising you; I am afraid his high opinion of you has often raised the demon of jealousy in my heart, and given me a fit of the sullens," she added, laughing one of her merry laughs.

It was very soothing to me to hear all this, and I longed to lead her to say more, but I felt that it would be dishonourable, and by no means a safe diet to feed upon; so, with an effort, I put aside the temptation, and said lightly,

"The surest way to preserve your good opinion then, I believe, would be to shun your acquaintance, Edith, but that we must not talk of, now."

"No, indeed, nor of anything else, except going down stairs; come, Mr. Annesley is waiting for us at the foot of the stairs," she

observed, opening the door as she put her arm within mine.

"Most ably done, my little spirit!" he exclaimed, as we joined him, "and now name your reward."

"For this time," she answered gaily, "I will be satisfied that you promise to place yourself between Mabel and myself at luncheon."

"Of course, my sweet Ariel," he replied, in the same tone, "where should I be, but by your side? But I am glad that you have forbearance enough not to claim the entire monopoly of Mabel."

How I envied Edith's careless gaiety! Never before had I felt the slightest constraint with Mr. Annesley, but now I could not shake off my reserve; I knew he noticed it, was trying to read the cause, was probably giving me credit for far better feelings than mine were, and attributing my unusual manner to a source, oh, how different from the true one! And the very consciousness that I had involuntarily become a hypocrite, made me shrink from his clear eyes the more.

It was the first time that constraint and mis-

understanding had come between us—why was this ? I asked myself in vain. I was vexed and ill at ease ; and oh ! I thought, what different feelings I had hoped for on the day of my confirmation !

CHAPTER VII.

"I spoke with faltering voice, like one
Not wholly rescued from the pale
Of a wild dream, or worse illusion."

WORDSWORTH.

THERE was a large party at luncheon. The Aubreys and Mrs. Mainwaring were all I knew, for the Forsters could hardly be called acquaintance, and the rest were perfect strangers. Mrs. Mainwaring was dressed superbly, as usual, and in the extreme of the fashion; she sate nearly opposite the Bishop; and, amidst all my trouble, it amused me to watch her manœuvres to attract his attention, and the air of patronage she assumed towards Aunt Martha, who, simple soul, seemed quite unconscious, and in her quiet ladylike way, utterly heedless of Mrs.

Mainwaring's efforts either to bring her forward, or throw her back. Amy was near Mrs. Mainwaring, only separated from her by a gentleman—a stranger, whom the latter had introduced.

He was very handsome, and seemed very much struck with Amy; I could not but notice his deferential manner, and the admiration with which he watched her when she spoke to others; I also thought Amy by no means blind to his homage, or unwilling to receive it.

Edith had so much to say to Mr. Annesley, that there was plenty of time for me to make these observations; the whole scene, too, was so new to me, that I was rather glad to be at liberty to sit quietly and look on. There was much in my mind, indeed, that I would fain have expressed to Mr. Annesley, but this was not the time, had I not even begun to feel that it might not now be quite so easy to talk to him as when he was last at the Grange. I could not shake off the strange reserve which had crept into my feelings towards him, and Edith, with all her brightness, was only like a shadow between us. Presently, I heard her say, "Is she always so silent and melancholy?"

I turned as the words caught my ear, and Mr. Annesley repeated them with a smile.

"Is she always so silent and melancholy, Edith asks me; what shall I answer, Mabel?"

"When she has nothing interesting to say," I replied, forcing a laugh, "or, at least, when there is so much to employ her eyes, perhaps would be nearer the truth, for I have plenty to say, that I should like to say, I mean—that is," I went on hesitatingly, "that I would fain ask."

Mr. Annesley looked at me earnestly for a moment; "you would like better one of our old quiet talks in the library, or on the terrace, perhaps;" he said, "this wild girl's nonsense, and this scene, are not so much in unison with your thoughts to-day: is it not so, Mabel?"

"I don't know," I replied, unable entirely to repress a sigh, "this is quite a novelty to me, and very amusing."

"I did not fancy your countenance expressed amusement, Mabel," he answered, speaking low, "and I ought to be able to read that book pretty correctly, unless the character be changed."

I did not look up as he spoke, not wishing him to read the feelings of my heart, which, I feared, might be only too legible in my face, so I kept my eyes down, and played busily with the corner of my handkerchief; after a minute, however, I raised them with a smile, as I answered,

“You have taken some pains to teach me a new character: is it surprising if I have learned to use it?”

He looked puzzled for a minute, and there was an unusual expression in his eyes as he said:—

“You speak in oracles too dark for my comprehension, Mabel. I think the wish to change your character in any way has been very far from me, however I might try to unfold it.”

I laughed as I cried, “Excellent! I have puzzled you with your own figure of speech! You have then forgotten those crabbed characters of various kinds which you have taught me to write in!”

He looked slightly annoyed, partly, perhaps, at my silly subterfuge, but more at the insincerity which he could not but be aware of in my words. I felt a sort of exultation on find-

ing I had still power to vex him, and, for a time, I enjoyed my paltry triumph, but presently I went on,

“There were other feelings mingling with my amusement; I was wishing for some wand that would lay open the secrets of people’s hearts to me—that was one; curiosity was another, I was wondering who that very handsome, fashionable-looking man could be talking to Amy.”

“For the former wish, Mabel,” Mr. Annesley answered gravely, “time will teach you that it is better to be content with the surface in ordinary cases. There are few hearts whose sincerity could bear the test of living always in such a palace of truth; fewer still which do not hold some hidden skeleton, some sick daughter grievously tormented, only to be looked upon or communed with when the closet of the heart is entered, and the door shut upon the world.”

“But might not the skeleton, as you call it, or the sorrow, whatever it be, become less terrible if the darkness of the closet were illuminated, if the object were viewed by the light of friendship?”

"Undoubtedly," he replied, "friendship is a light that cheers many a dark and gloomy chamber, but there are some troubles which we cannot, or would not, impart, because we should only grieve our friend, without lessening our own burden, and that would be nothing but selfishness."

"Look not every man on his own, but every man on the things of another," I answered timidly, without raising my eyes.

"True, Mabel," he said; "it is sweet to be able to help others, but it is cruel to burden them with sorrows which they have no means of alleviating. There is only One," he added, sinking his voice still lower, "to Whom such loads can be committed, and Who can give us the relief and rest we crave."

"What are you two muttering and looking so grave about?" exclaimed the gay voice of Edith.

"We were looking grave, Edith," replied Mr. Annesley, with an instantaneous change of voice and manner, "because we were in trouble, floundering beyond our depth, and the low mutterings might soon have become screams for help. You and your companion have evi-

dently been more prudent, or you would not so promptly have come to the rescue."

"Mr. Aubrey, do you mean Gardie?" she asked, with an arch glance at Clarence, who was on the other side, "oh, yes! we were in very shallow water indeed, only dabbling in the tide-pools!"

I believe Clarence made some gay remark about the treasures to be found in such pools, but, for the moment, I was lost to the conversation. The word "Gardie" had set me thinking, and I was only conscious of the mingled voices and merry laughter of Edith and Clarence.

Then Mr. Annesley was her guardian! But why should it have been made a secret? and why was there that peculiar tenderness in his manner towards her not usual between guardian and ward? Why?—I might have gone on with many more whys and wherefores, if my speculations had not been suddenly arrested by Mr. Annesley's asking me if I were still wondering who Amy's handsome neighbour was?

The idea of how different was the subject of my late speculations made me laugh; but, with-

out entering into unnecessary explanations, I expressed myself still curious on the point.

“What! not know Percy Claytoun, Mabel?” Clarence asked; and, as I shook my head in token of ignorance, he went on, “Why he is the son of Mr. Claytoun, the rich banker of Winterford, who lives at Everleigh Court.”

“Oh, of course, I know all about the Claytouns!” I replied, rather piqued that Clarence should pretend to a better acquaintance with the localities than I possessed. “I know Mr. Claytoun has a son in the army—is this he?”

“To be sure it is; and a capital good fellow he is, though he does lead his governor a dance!” was Clarence’s reply.

“A capital good fellow he may be,” remarked Mr. Annesley, “yet, Aubrey, I would not advise you to cultivate his acquaintance. He has, as you say, led his governor a dance: in other words, he has cost his father a great deal of anxiety, and much money, besides annoyance, in refusing to enter the business as he wished him to do.”

“Business! yes, I should think so!” exclaimed Clarence, indignantly, “what has Percy

to do with business, or the drudgery of making money?"

"Little enough, I own," Mr. Annesley said, smiling, "though quite enough with spending it; twice already, I believe, his father has paid his debts to save him from being obliged to leave the army. But he is, as you say, an off-hand, pleasant fellow, and popular in his regiment, I am told."

There was no more said at the time; the party broke up and separated; some went into the drawing-room, others strolled into the garden. I stole away to the church, and, seating myself on the step of the reading-desk, strove to collect my thoughts, and recall to mind the events of the morning.

The stillness was very calming, and I remained there a long time without any interruption. At last, I heard voices in the porch; and, a moment after, Amy passed without seeing me; she seemed pre-occupied, and began to busy her fingers about a garland which hung on the wall, some of the flowers of which were drooping, but her thoughts seemed otherwise engaged. I sate still, intending to creep away unobserved, as I could distinguish the voice of

Mrs. Mainwaring, talking and laughing with a gentleman, and did not wish to meet them then and there.

"Ah! there she is! I thought we should find her presently!" I heard Mrs. Mainwaring say, "she looks like a bright angel in that white dress, does she not, Mr. Claytoun?"

"I think Miss Willoughby has greatly the advantage in the comparison," he answered, "that lovely flesh and blood suits my taste better than anything so ethereal."

"Amy, do you hear that?" Mrs. Mainwaring asked; but Amy took no notice, though the expression of her face shewed that she had heard, and was half-vexed, half-gratified by the compliment. "What is she doing?" Mrs. Mainwaring continued, as she approached; "my dear, are you pulling that to pieces?"

"If so, I shall at least venture to claim a morsel as a relic," Mr. Claytoun said.

"I am not pulling it to pieces," Amy replied gravely; "on the contrary, I am trying to replace some of the flowers!"

"Most unsuccessfully it must be owned,"

laughed Mrs. Mainwaring, "see, there is a bud now fallen !"

"Clearly, an interference of the saints specially in my favour," Mr. Claytoun observed, as he stooped to pick up the flower. I longed to come from my retreat and help Amy, whose countenance now betrayed annoyance only, and I was rising to do so, when my aunt at the moment appeared ; she must have caught the last words, too, for she spoke gravely, almost sternly, as she held out her hand for the bud and said,

"Pardon me, Mr. Claytoun, but I think my brother would exceedingly dislike to have these flowers made the subject of light jesting ; so, if you will allow me, I will replace it."

Her sudden appearance and composed manner made an impression on them all apparently : with a slight bow, Mr. Claytoun silently put the flower into the hand of my aunt who restored it to its place, and then addressing Mrs. Mainwaring, asked if she would not return to the house for coffee, and they all left the church together.

Once more, then, I found myself alone, and remained so undisturbed till all the guests had

departed for their respective homes. This quiet hour gave me an opportunity of recollecting some of the thoughts and aspirations which had been so scattered in the morning, but I felt dreadfully disappointed; the time was gone, the occasion past, to which I had looked forward so long and earnestly, thinking that it would be devoted entirely to calm and serious determination and reflection. I had not calculated upon the unavoidable mixture of the worldly element, and now I found not only that it had mingled with, but almost overpowered the real object of the day. By degrees, I got a glimpse of the meaning of this; of the continual struggle there must ever be from the dawn of life to the closing night of death, between God and the world in the heart. How much more real and present the latter will always appear, and how it must need continual watchfulness to prevent its gaining the entire mastery!

It was but a feeble glimmering that struggled through the misty atmosphere of my mind, but it was something to have found a clue, slight as it was, to guide me through this labyrinth, and enable me, by God's help, to choose the right path, and follow it at all consistently.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ I’ll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom ;
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom.”

TENNYSON.

It was not long before Mr. Claytoun was at the Rectory again, and this time his sister accompanied him. They professed themselves much pleased at the opportunity of making our acquaintance, and quite indebted to Mrs. Mainwaring for the introduction. I thought Amy was fully as much gratified, though she said but little, and Mr. Claytoun had innumerable plans for drawing us together, which she seemed very willing to fall into—excursions, riding and boating parties—it seemed the next few weeks must be devoted to pleasure alone.

The Claytouns had no mother, and their

father being engaged all day long with his business in Winterford, the girls had little to study beyond their own amusement ; and, during their brother's stay, his wishes were their laws. By the time they remounted their horses to return to Everleigh Court, quite an intimacy seemed to have been established between our two families.

I look back now to what Percy Claytoun was then, and think I have never seen any one more fascinating ; fond of pleasure, delighting in display, and open hearted, he won favour wherever he went : the brilliancy of his good qualities eclipsed his many faults, and even those who were clear-sighted enough to penetrate this shining veil, could hardly resist the charm it threw over him.

Business ! What had such a man to do with the common cares of this working world ? No ! with taste, and tact which enabled it to pass muster for talent ; a ready power of expressing himself, a happy art of conversing agreeably, and if with no great depth, with at least interest on all subjects—it was difficult for the most prudent to resist the pleasant ease of his manner ; so it was no wonder that when all these powers were

addressed to the captivation of Amy, she should yield to their influence.

But, at that time, my thoughts were not so much occupied with either Percy or Amy, as intent on discovering the mystery which shrouded Edith Marsh. No one else shewed any curiosity on the subject, and I somehow shrank from drawing attention to my own eagerness by asking questions. I feared the banter of Amy, and the grave reproofs of Aunt Martha.

Mrs. Mainwaring, who had doubtless both the power and the will to solve my difficulties, had left home for a short time the day after the confirmation ; so I was obliged, like the rest, to accept her as the ward of Mr. Annesley, and the friend of his sister, and content myself with supposing that young and lovely as she was, it was natural that she should reside with the latter, rather than with a guardian not many years older than herself, and receive that as a reason for his silence about her hitherto.

It was seldom now that I went to the Grange, never without my aunt or Amy. Edith was often at the Rectory, for Mr. Annesley was frequently there in consultation with my father, and

she always accompanied him ; when, though his visits seldom extended beyond the study, her time was spent with us in the drawing-room.

Mr. Annesley, I believe, was endeavouring to re-establish a charity which had been set on foot, about two centuries ago, by one of the Dame Annesleys, whereby twelve poor widows were housed and supported. In the troublous times of Charles I., and as the property had been taken from the family, this institution had died away. Some lands that had been set apart for its support had fallen into other hands, and it was difficult now to revive it.

But Mr. Annesley's maxim was, that whatever the losses might be, or however needful retrenchment, it should not begin with the charities ; and, as he had been for years carefully nursing his means, and had not only preserved the small estate which he inherited, free from all incumbrances, but had even regained some of the alienated property, he was very desirous to restore the old foundation of his ancestress to its original footing, and this occupied much time and occasioned considerable thought both to himself and my father.

Edith, therefore, was much at the Rectory ; and yet with all the charm of her beauty and sweet infantine manner, I never could feel her to be more than a mere companion. Clarence, however, thought differently, it was plain ; for, as he was almost always at the Rectory, we noticed that whether Edith drove or walked, her return was always the signal for his own departure ; and the way to the Grange was, by some tortuous method, always found to be the best and most direct road to the Knoll, though in fact it almost doubled the distance.

One morning, he paid us an earlier visit than usual ; we generally saw him come bounding across the garden to the drawing-room window, vaulting over my flower-beds after so perilous a fashion, that it often called forth remonstrances on my part, to which his usual reply was,

“Never mind, Mabel, it is only a delicate mode of making you a present ; for, don’t you see that for every tiny blossom I destroy, I levy black mail on the Knoll gardens to replace it, so instead of checking, your interest is rather to encourage my saltatory manner of progress ?”

On the morning in question, however, there

was no need to complain ; he walked slowly and soberly across the garden, threading his way between the beds most carefully, and seeming to take pleasure in prolonging the distance.

My aunt looked up in alarm as he stood at last before the window, with a countenance of doleful aspect.

“ Why, Clarence !” she exclaimed, “ what can have happened ? has Her Majesty refused to admit you into her service ?”

“ Or,” laughingly interrupted Amy, “ is the pretty Edith unkind, or Gardie hard-hearted ?” imitating her childish tone.

“ On the contrary, Mrs. Stanley,” Clarence replied, without heeding Amy’s raillery ; “ her Majesty is proud to enroll me among the defenders of my country, witness these presents,” and he drew from his pocket an official-looking letter.

“ Ah, then,” continued Amy, with assumed commiseration, “ it is anticipated sorrow that clouds the hero’s brow, the dream of

“ ‘ Partings such as tear,
The life from out young hearts.’ ”

“ Nonsense, Amy,” my aunt said, observing

that Clarence winced under her raillery ; then, turning to him, she went on, "This is no news to be told with that sad countenance, Clarence, surely ; but I suppose it is but the reflection of your mother's, who finds the prospect of losing you less pleasing as it approaches ; nevertheless, I must congratulate you both. My brother, too, will be glad to hear it ; you must tell him ; he is in the study."

"Thank you, Mrs. Stanley, I will go and look for him presently, and I must tell Mr. Annesley, too ; but, perhaps, he may be coming here this morning," he added, brightening up a little.

A merry laugh burst from Amy, as she exclaimed,

"Oh man of cunning wile ! you have mistaken your vocation, not war surely, but diplomacy should be your path."

He laughed, too. "Beware, Amy !" he said, "you know the caution recommended to those who dwell in glass houses."

Aunt Martha looked up quickly ; Amy was silent, but the blood mounted to her brow.

"Ah, Clarence, you have lost your own guard by that last thrust," I put in, seeking

to draw attention from Amy, "keep a cool head and a steady eye, I believe, is a rule with good fencers, and now you have exposed your own weak side for want of attention to this."

"Take care of yourself, my little Bandarillera," he replied, turning upon me, "or I may have a turn with you."

"My dear Clarence," Aunt Martha said, "you would keep us all at bay this morning, can't even this poor child escape?"

"Child!" repeated Clarence with a laugh; "Mr. Annesley considers Edith Marsh no child at seventeen; Mabel is not two years younger, I think, Mrs. Stanley; but I must not stay," he went on hurriedly, "I promised my mother to be home early; good bye." Then, returning a few minutes after, he said, without coming in, "I had forgotten my mother's message; Ruth comes to us to-morrow, will you all come over and dine at the Knoll? There will be amusement for all ages, so I may say you will, may I not? eh, Amy?" and, without waiting for an answer, he bounded off.

"And so Lady Ruth is coming to take the field in person," said Amy, "no wonder the

barometer was low with Clarence this morning."

"My dear Amy," Aunt Martha replied, deprecatingly, "pray don't try to make a romance out of nothing. Clarence is engaged to his cousin, and I dare say is quite content with the arrangement; and Edith, you know is—oh, there's your papa, I must give him Mrs. Aubrey's message before he goes out, or I don't know when I shall see him again," she exclaimed, rising hastily.

"Edith is what, aunt?" I asked, eagerly catching at her words.

"Have you never heard about Edith, Mabel?" she said, "I thought everybody knew that story; but I must not stop to talk now," and she ran quickly after my father.

Before she returned, visitors were announced, and the day passed without an opportunity of recurring to the subject, but it did not the less occupy my mind. "Edith you know, is—" "What is she?" were the words which kept perpetually tormenting me, and to which I could obtain no satisfactory reply; for the next morning brought news of the illness of

my aunt's step-daughter, which obliged her to leave immediately ; and then Amy and I were left to take care of ourselves for a time ; so, after the engagement at the Knoll had been kept, our mode of life subsided into its usual quiet.

Besides my father and ourselves, the Claytouns and Annesleys were the only guests at the Knoll. Edith was not of the party : a slight indisposition was the excuse for her absence, so Lady Ruth had no rival which, for her own sake, I could not help thinking fortunate, for gentle and amiable as she seemed, that fair expressionless beauty, and cold manner would not have borne comparison with the rich loveliness, and warm impulsive, and somewhat coquettish manner of Edith Marsh.

I don't know exactly whether more selfish reasons might have been found for my not regretting her absence, but the day was a very pleasant one, and I did not inquire, perhaps, very closely what made it so particularly agreeable. Amy, too, seemed happy, and Clarence, I think, was the only one who appeared unsatisfied.

But the summer was now drawing to a close, and our little society broke up. Mr. Claytoun's leave expired, and Clarence went to join his regiment, and the shortening of the days warned Miss Annesley to retreat into winter-quarters ; Edith, of course, accompanied her, and Mr. Annesley remained for a short time alone at Beechley.

Aunt Martha's absence made a great difference to us : it was the first time we had been left quite alone, and we found a great blank in spite of the increased importance which Amy obtained as mistress of the house. Now and then she spent a day or two at Everleigh Court, and we were both invited to Brackenhurst, but only to formal dinner-parties, which, at a house where there was so much ostentation and so little friendliness, did not give girls, so young as we were, much pleasure.

A walk to Arden House the mistress of which was still absent, and a day occasionally at the Knoll, were the only other breaks into our usual monotonous life ; for, as long as Mr. Annesley remained at the Grange, we were excluded from that except when something took my father there.

After a time, however, Mr. Annesley took wing for the continent, with the intention of being absent some months, and then I resumed my dominion in the library and the garden.

CHAPTER IX.

"A well of love—it may be deep—
I trust it is—and never dry ;
What matter ? If the water sleep
In silence and obscurity."

WORDSWORTH.

PHILIP's return for the Christmas holidays, made a little break in our quiet habits. The Claytouns, too, gave a ball while he was at home. Amy was there on a visit at the time, and was present, of course ; and, taking advantage of the season, Philip and myself were invited.

My father, however, had an objection to the proceeding, and not being arrived at the full dignity of young-ladyhood, the invitation was declined for me, which did not, in fact, occasion me any disappointment ; I was too shy to feel

any pleasure in the idea of dancing with strangers.

Philip, of course, took the privilege of his sex, and followed his own inclination, which led him to the ball, and from him I heard startling accounts of Amy's appearance, and the admiration she excited. The latter was by no means lost upon Amy herself, as I found on her return, by the increased importance she assumed, and the half suppressed confidences I received relative to the attentions paid her by Percy, who had got leave of absence for the occasion.

Indeed, many days did not pass after the ball, before he was again at Arden Rise ; this time, however, he was not shewn into the drawing-room ; but after a visit of very long duration, to my father in his study, during which Amy shewed evident signs of uneasiness, we heard him leave the house. A minute or two after, the study-door opened, and my father called Amy.

It was plain that she knew the object of Percy's visit, and suspected its result, for her colour went and came rapidly : she tried to rise, and then sank down again, bursting into tears. I went up to her, but, as I put my arm round her neck, and kissing her, attempted to whisper

some comfort, she raised her head, and throwing my arm angrily from her, said,

“You may spare your pity, Mabel, till you find me in want of it,”

I drew back, hurt at her coldness, and said, “Dear Amy, I am glad if this is no disappointment; I thought—”

“Silly child,” she said, with a forced laugh as she kissed me, “what do you know about the matter?”

“Nothing,” I replied, “but that I knew Mr. Claytoun—”

At this moment, another and more peremptory summons from the study broke off the conversation; and, quickly wiping the tears from her cheeks, Amy hastened away. When she returned, there was such a peculiar expression in her face as she came up to where I was sitting, that I said, as I looked eagerly at her,

“Then he has not been refused, Amy; I am so glad!”

“Papa has refused him,” she replied, in an emphatic tone, “so there is an end of the matter.”

“And you don’t regret it, Amy?” I asked.

“I am not going to play the Niobe, at all

events, on that account, you may be sure," she said, with an affectation of indifference; but there was a strong pressure of the fingers that made me look searchingly into her face, though I could not decipher what was there, and seeing that she did not wish the subject carried on, I said no more.

For a time, my father seemed anxious, and his tenderness to Amy was redoubled; but, as there was little or no apparent difference in her spirits, things gradually fell into their old course again, and the only change the affair seemed to have produced, was that the visits to Everleigh Court ceased, though civilities were still kept up between the families.

So time went on, and Philip returned to school, and the days began to lengthen; in the meantime, I had hit upon a new study which occupied me entirely. I had found among the more modern books at the Grange, some descriptive of the denizens of the sea, and the wonders of the shore. They opened a new world to me, and our vicinity to the coast gave me the opportunity of prosecuting my new study, practically, as well as theoretically.

I did not, indeed, indulge in the luxury of

aquarium or vivarium : such playthings were suited neither to our small rooms, or moderate means, nor was it my object to pursue the study scientifically. I sought but a more extended knowledge of the marvels of nature, and, by a closer examination of the works of the Creator, to understand how the most minute and lowest forms of creation bear the impress of His mighty hand, and are cared for by Him, even as the grandest and most elevated. I pretended not to enlarge the range of science, only to educate my own heart ; and, for this purpose, I preferred the mighty vivarium of nature to one on a more confined scale.

There was a cottage belonging to a fisherman, which stood on the boundary of the parish, with the inhabitants of which I formed a close alliance. They consisted of an old man, Adam Griffith, and his wife, Molly. He had formerly served on board a man-of-war, and was full of tales of the dangers he had passed through, and the wonders he had seen " in foreign parts."

He had borne his part in some of the great naval engagements under Nelson, and, as he never tired of narrating, it was a great boon to

him to find one like myself who was so willing to listen to the stirring scenes he described.

He had been on board the 'Victory' when Nelson died, and witnessed the parting scene between the great admiral and his favorite, Captain Hardy. He described, with all the enthusiasm of a spectator, the gallantry with which Berry hastened aloft, and nailed the colours to the mast when they had been shot away; with many other soul-arousing anecdotes.

Many an hour have I spent in listening to the old man's tales, till I almost wished to change sexes with Philip, and go in search of the noble and spirit-stirring actions and adventures old Adam so graphically described. But, when I expressed such a desire, my ardour was always damped by the reply, "Ah, Miss, in my day, a sea-faring life was a glorious one! but alack-a-day! Nelson's dead now!"

For Adam, the glory of the navy was departed, and his life was too much bound up with the memory of the hero of the Nile to admit of a successor, even though it was prolonged to see those of the present day arise. In his eyes, no commander could compete with Nelson, nor could he ever be brought to ac-

knowledge the advantages of steam in the modern navy; he could see nothing heroic in hot water.

But it was not alone as a narrator of such great deeds that Adam's alliance was valued by me: he had gotten together a very respectable collection of shells and sea-weeds from the various coasts he had visited; and, though he would, perhaps, have found it hard to discourse on conchology, or the Algæ, the Fauna, or the Flora of the sea, he had acquired some practical knowledge of their names, and could tell something of the habitat and peculiarities of every specimen he possessed. He knew well the riches of the coast on which he lived; and, as he had a boat, and was still able, with the help of a grandson, to go out fishing, he used often to bring me home, in his nets, contributions which I could have had no means of procuring otherwise.

His wife, but a little younger than himself, was a cripple from rheumatism, so, by a little kindness to her, I had many opportunities of repaying the services of her husband. Not that payment was thought of by either. Happy in themselves, and contented with their

lot, it was a sufficient pleasure to find that in any way they could serve others still, and, I believe, the pride and delight old Molly took in hearing her husband describe his past life, and in seeing the pleasure with which I listened to his tales, was ample compensation for any exertions he made to aid me.

I am not quite sure, though, that old Adam had the entire merit of enlisting my interest. In many of his stories, the name of Annesley occurred : he had served under an uncle of the present owner of the Grange, and the sort of claim this gave him upon the nephew, was by no means ignored.

Often I had to listen to Mr. Annesley's praises, and to admire the tangible proofs of his kind thoughtfulness for the old couple : it was this subject which generally excited old Molly's eloquence. Many were the lamentations that he was so little at the Grange now, "Though present or absent," she said, "he never forgot any of the poor, or especially themselves, but she would far rather see him enter their poor cabin, just as if it were the finest palace in the country ; and hear him speak, so kind and respectful like, and listen to Adam's tales, and

ask all about my rheumatics, just all as one as if we were his equals and friends. Ah!" she would go on, warming with her subject, "he be a good gentleman! and I wish he'd but money enough to buy back all he's lost, and fill his purse as full of guineas as his heart is of kindness!"

"They do say as Miss Edith's to marry him when she's of age," the old woman went on one day, "and that she have a fine place, and a power of money. Well, well! but it's not by a wife like that as I would see the Grange set up again!"

"Whisht, Molly!" said her husband, "sure Miss Edith's been a kind friend to us! Remember the fine new Jersey she brought me, and the comfortable bedding she sent to keep you warm in the winter nights."

"Ah, well," replied the old woman, "I wouldn't think small of anyone as shewed kindness to such as we, though, may be, it was not all her own thought: but there, I shouldn't say that, may be, and she's a sweet young lady; but I'd looked to see another mistress at the Grange!"

"Hush, woman!" put in her husband again.

"What do you know about Mr. Ralph, or Miss Edith?"

"Miss Marsh is a very sweet girl, Molly," I observed, interrupting the conjugal dialogue, "and, whatever choice Mr. Annesley makes, will, no doubt, be a wise and good one."

"Choice!" repeated the old woman, "ah, that's what he won't have—"

I rose to go, for anxious as I was to know more of the mysterious Edith, and much as these few words had whetted my curiosity, I could neither condescend to gratify it by the gossip of these old people, nor listen to their comments upon the proceedings of their neighbours; so promising to call again soon, I took leave; and, profiting by the low ebb of the spring-tide, I walked slowly homeward by the beach—my mind filled with other thoughts than those which the tempting expanse of sand and sea-weed-covered rocks before me, would have supplied at another time.

Edith Marsh stood out now in a new phase. Wealthy, and the future mistress of the dear old Grange, and wife of Ralph Annesley!

That he should marry any one for her wealth alone, however he might need it, (which

by the bye he did not, for though not, perhaps, affluent, he was not poor), was repugnant to my exalted idea of his character. Old Molly had sneered at the word "choice;" but did that sneer mean that the choice was not his own, or that eligibility had overpowered choice?

No; that was quite incompatible with a character so nearly perfect, in my estimation at least, as his, or even with one less so, who was the descendant of such a gallant ancestry. She was his ward: how she became so, I was ignorant. Was it possible that *she* had chosen, and that he was too kind, too delicate to reject her young heart? No again! She was too young for such a thought to have entered her mind—I forgot at the moment that she was two years my senior—too unconstrained in her manner towards him. Still, there she was, an undeniable fact, beautiful, wealthy, loving, and—yes, I could not but add—beloved!

Well, what was it all to me? Mr. Annesley had pitied the poor, despised, ignorant Mabel; he had opened and enriched her mind; tried to develop and to strengthen her character; made her feel that, at least, one could take in-

terest in her. What more did she expect? That question was difficult to answer; I passed on to another. Why should not Mr. Annesley have just such a wife as Edith Marsh? for could she not bestow all that I had so often wished to give, and far more? In money, yes; in beauty and perfection of character, no! I repeated to myself with increasing vehemence, no, no, no! Beautiful she was indeed, but hers was too voluptuous a beauty; his was not the heart to feel the power of such, nor was hers the character to win his love;—Infantine, impulsive, coquettish—No, she was not that

“ . . . Fair divided excellence,
Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.”

What mental affinity could she have with one whose guiding star was high principle, whose whole being was imbued with the nobility of his ancestry, and what sympathy could he have with the childish Edith?

Tell me not of opposite natures supplying to one another what is wanting in each, that were needless to Mr. Annesley. And then the Grange, the charming old Grange! the antique library, the suggestive hall, the quaint furni-

ture, the tapestry, the old oak, the owls, and bats, and venerable ivy, the formal gardens and avenues, and, above all, that dearly loved green terrace with the summer-house ! What could Edith, the childish, gay, ephemeral Edith, do as mistress of a place so redolent of old memories and associations ? Would not her first act be to destroy all the antiquity, and to replace it by modern improvements ? And how would Mr. Annesley bear to have all that he so highly prized discarded, and the venerable Grange converted into a fashionable modern residence ?

I know not how far my lucubrations would have carried me, even, perhaps, to the determination of solemnly forbidding the banns, should the world be called upon to shew "just cause or impediment why those two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony," when my steps, as well as my thoughts, were arrested by the barrier of a ridge of rock before me, the foot of which was already washed by the waves.

I had been so deep in thought, that my ears had been heedless of the increasing roar of the advancing tide. I had forgotten the rapidity of

the rise of a spring-tide, and that it was only for a short time after the dead low water that that ridge could be rounded.

However, I was a fearless climber, and tolerably experienced ; and, though to walk round the point was impracticable, I saw that it was quite possible to clamber over it, and with only the inconvenience of wetting my feet, drop myself down on the other side in safety. It was not the first time by many that the same plan had been adopted by me, for the space over which I had been walking formed a shallow bay of about a mile in extent, cut off from the rest of the beach soon after low water, by an abrupt headland at one end, and this ridge, of less impassible height, at the other.

It was called locally "behind the rocks," and was a favourite resort of mine for the sake of the treasures it contained, not only in shells rarely found on any other part of the coast, but also on account of a ledge of sunken rock, running out far to sea, called the "Little Rocks," which, when the retreating tide left them uncovered, presented untold riches to the lover of sea-weeds, as the tide-pools and deep fissures were full of every

variety of coralline and sea-monster, and marine curiosity.

Amidst these beautiful natural objects I had been accustomed to linger, daring old Neptune, and calculating, to a nicety, the latest moment when it would be possible to elude his grasp, and I now found that I had reached the rock precisely at that juncture ; but the obstacle, and the necessary bodily exertion which it required, effectually scattered all my speculations to the winds, nor did I care to entangle myself again in their mazes, after I had succeeded in surmounting the more palpable difficulty in my path ; so gathering up my wet dress I walked briskly homewards ; there, on my arrival, I had to submit to a lecture, or rather, a scolding from old nurse Phœbe, upon my unladylike propensity for wandering alone, and clambering over rocks ; the detriment to my *chaussure*, caused by the sea-water ; the destruction of my gloves, in my attention to the sailor's maxim, of minding my hands, and letting my feet take care of themselves ; and the state of my dress, which, wet as it was, had picked up a bordering of sand and red dust by no means desirable, whether considered economically or ornamentally.

Poor Phœbe! even she had cause of complaint against me; and, though the want of ability, and absence of talent, so much lamented by others, were of no account in her estimation, she could not but mourn over what she deemed my insensibility to the proprieties of life, or, in other words, my unwillingness to victimize myself to my toilette. I used sometimes laughingly to tell her, a broken limb would be thought of but small importance by her, compared with a torn or soiled dress.

But I would not do the old woman injustice, for, I believe, such sentiments are common to the guardians of youth—feminine, I mean; for I remember hearing an exemplary mother, on seeing her daughter get a severe fall, express anxiety for the fate of her dress, before thinking of the danger to her person.

CHAPTER X.

“ Was ich in jedem Augenblick empfunden,
Und was ich sang vergebens sinn' ich nach,
Ein neu Organ hatt' ich in mir gefunden,
Das meines Herzen's heil'ge Regung sprach;
Die Seele war's, die Jahre lang gebunden,
Durch alle Fesseln jetzt auf einmal brach,
Und Töne fand in ihren tiefsten Tiefen,
Die ungeahnt und Göttlich in ihr schliefen.”

SCHILLER.

“ OH, Fenton, what an exquisite thing !” was Amy's exclamation one bright May morning, as we saw the gardener crossing the lawn with one of those fairy flower-baskets swinging from his hand. It was the first of its kind that had penetrated into that remote region. “ Where did you get it ?” she went on, “ for I suppose you did not rear it in the Grange green-houses ?”

"No, Miss," he replied, chuckling, "that is a little beyond my skill, and, indeed, it's about the first of the kind I have seen myself. Miss Edith saw some at the Great Exhibition in London, last year, so master had some sent down, and told me to bring this one to Miss Mabel."

"*Told you, Fenton?*" I repeated, "then is Mr. Annesley at the Grange?"

"Yes, Miss, he came last night," Fenton said, "but these have been there this month past, only you never come nigh us now, Miss."

It was true, though it would have been hard to give a reason for my absence, but I had abandoned my old haunts there almost ever since my last visit to old Adam.

"It is very kind in him to send me such a beautiful thing, Fenton," I said, "and now you must help me to hang it here from the verandah; you shall fetch the steps, for we cannot put it on the ground. It is a true bird of paradise, no feet, no rest for it on this nether earth."

Fenton looked as though he did not comprehend my flight, any more than that of the

bird I spoke of; but the word "paradise," caught his ear, and he went on, "yes, indeed, master is making just a paradise, as Miss Edith calls it, of the Grange: such a power of beautiful things as came down from London lately."

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" I sighed mentally, and was the venerable Grange really to be turned into a cockney villa, and hung about with gew-gaws like this basket? And I am afraid the fairy thing, with its gay coronal of flowers, excited for a moment nothing but disgust in my mind. The ungracious mood, however, did not last long; and as I sate and admired the graceful basket, gently vibrating in the breeze, and scattering its rich perfume with every undulation, my transient ill-humour was lost in the pleasure of thinking gratefully, that through all, Mr. Annesley had not forgotten me.

In the evening, he came to the Rectory; Amy had not returned from Arden House, whither she had gone in the afternoon, and I was alone when I heard the familiar step traversing the short space between the study and the drawing-room. I held out my hand without speaking, as he entered and came up to the table at which

I sate, for I felt an odd choking sensation in my throat which made speech difficult.

"This is a cold welcome, Mabel," he said with a smile, as he took my hand and seated himself beside me, "have you no word for your old friend?"

"Many!" I began, and then fearful that I had spoken too vehemently, I resumed more coldly, "I have to give you many thanks for the kind and beautiful token of remembrance I received from you this morning."

He was silent for a moment; and, as he still held my hand, I gently withdrew it.

"You have not been at the Grange lately, Mabel; how is that?" he said gravely.

I knew not what answer to give, and was silent.

"Has it no longer any attractions for you?" he went on.

I was apprehensive that he might construe my avoidance of the place, during his absence, into an admission that he was the attraction, so I answered evasively, laying my hand on one of Gosse's sea-side books, that the spirit of the library had led me away from the library.

"Ah, I see," he said smiling, "you are be-

coming a natural philosopher; I heard something of this from old Adam to-day."

"To-day?" I repeated, "why, you only returned last night, and Fenton said you were full of business; how could you find time to go so far?"

"Edith had something to send to the old couple, and made me the bearer of it," he said.

"Edith!" I echoed, once more looking quickly up, "I thought you had been on the continent?" and I stopped.

"Most true, Mabel;" he replied, with his quiet smile, "I was on the continent all the winter; but is that any reason why I should not have seen Edith since my return?"

"It is you," I said, in a low voice, "for whom the Grange has lost its attractions, or you would not have made your first visit elsewhere."

"You are jealous for the Grange, my little Mabel," he answered gaily, "but there is no need to be so; it has not been forgotten as you will own when you see it, which I hope will be to-morrow. I have just been asking your papa to bring Amy and you there, to cheer my

bachelor dinner to-morrow ; it will be the last for some time, for my sister and Edith come the day after. But now you must tell me about Amy and the neighbourhood."

There was not much to tell ; Mrs. Aubrey was not inclined to be very sociable ; with the Forsters *we* were not much disposed for sociability ; visiting between the Claytouns and ourselves had subsided into a mere exchange of calls at long intervals ; and Mrs. Mainwaring had been away till within the last month.

"The Claytouns," he said, "yes, I hear young Claytoun proposed for Amy at Christmas, and was refused by Mr. Willoughby with good reason, and now he has made a bet in the regiment that, in spite of all, Amy shall be his wife before Christmas comes round again."

I felt shocked and grieved that dear Amy's name should have been so lightly used, and that Mr. Claytoun shewed so little respect for one whom he professed to love, as to make her the subject of a regimental bet. I said I hoped it would not come to Amy's ears, adding, "I have at least the satisfaction of believing that he will

lose his bet, for papa's refusal seemed to cause her little disappointment, and she laughs at the idea of being supposed to care for him."

Mr. Annesley said he was glad to hear it; young Claytoun with all his fascination, he feared, was a worthless fellow; and he should be sorry had he power to cause Amy a moment's uneasiness. Then he rose and went to the piano, saying as he opened it,

"You must give me some music, Mabel; I have got one or two things that I think will suit you; but first I must hear some of my old favourites; that is a treat only *you* can give me."

I looked up in astonishment. "I? and you have only just left Edith?"

"Edith has had more teaching than you," he answered, "and she has well profited by it; she is a proficient, I must own, but what I want is not skill, but music, and that want you alone can satisfy, Mabel."

I sat down to the instrument; Mr. Annesley's words had given me an impetus that almost amounted to inspiration. Was it possible that I possessed the gift to be able to charm him so? I resolved to try my power; and, when after

preluding slightly, I fell into one of Schubert's beautifully pathetic songs, I yielded with full *abandon* to the charm of the exquisite music ; my voice seconded my desire, it seemed, indeed, to have acquired a richness and pathos of which I had not supposed it capable. Timidity, hitherto my bane, wholly forsook me ; I felt now that I had one fortress impregnable to the enemy, and revelled in the assurance of my strength. I went on from song to song, till my very soul seemed to be breathing itself forth in the words and tones which flowed from my lips. It was the first triumph I had ever known, and I enjoyed it to the utmost, and all the more that I could see its effect upon my auditor.

He sate at a table removed from the piano, his face shaded by his hand ; but, though the working of the features was not visible, I could read the motionless attitude, the entranced silence, the entire abandonment of his soul to the spell I was weaving about it.

At last I ceased, and then he rose and approached the piano. "Thank you, Mabel," he said, closing the instrument ; "the bud has

indeed expanded into a rose, the linnet into a nightingale; but this is an enjoyment I must be very chary of permitting myself."

"You have the best right," I began, but my speech, happily, perhaps, was interrupted by the entrance of Amy.

"Coming events cast their shadows before, generally," she said, laughing, as she shook hands with Mr. Annesley, "but you have cast brightness in advance. That elegant little basket could only be appropriately acknowledged by a poet. I hope Mabel has done honour to the gift, for, indeed, I should be at a loss."

"You have already far outdone me, Amy," I said, with a laugh; "my thanks were very imperfectly expressed, if indeed they were at all."

"Mabel has been setting her thanks to music," Mr. Annesley said.

"Well, that would be about on a par with my poetry," was Amy's reply; and, as Mr. Annesley proceeded to ask some questions about Mrs. Mainwaring, the conversation fell into another channel.

We all went to the Grange next day. I

rather dreaded an inundation of modern luxuries superseding the quaint and massive furniture which belonged to the place, and was agreeably surprised to find that scarcely any change had been made in the rooms below; only in the drawing-rooms a few couches and lounging-chairs had been added, all in correspondence with the original style. Even a superb mirror, which stood above the antique console between the windows of what was called the state drawing-room, seemed no innovation.

I was beginning to hope that Fenton's report had been an exaggerated one, when, after dinner, Mr. Annesley said he wanted our feminine opinion on some alterations he had been making in what went by the name of the Bower-rooms, up-stairs; and we followed him up the massive oaken staircase, the steps of which hardly gave one the necessity of lifting one's feet, and along the wide gallery with which the bed-rooms communicated, till at the end he pushed open the folding-doors which led into a small corridor.

"This is the ground I want you to explore,"

he said, "so I shall leave you to do so at leisure, expecting you will tell me if any improvement can be suggested."

Improvement! Why, it seemed as if we had got into an enchanted palace! On one side there was a bed-room, a dressing-room, with bath, and every elegance that could be devised. On the other, a small octagon morning room, communicating with a conservatory filled with the choicest flowers, and closed by a little aviary; while, from the roof, hung fairy baskets like my own. We were fairly bewildered by the sight of luxury we were so little prepared for.

"And Edith is to be queen of this palace," I thought. "It is for her that this costly shrine is raised!"

I sat down in silence, and opened some of the elegantly-bound books which lay on the tables. It was, at least, some comfort to see that none of those which were peculiar favourites with either Mr. Annesley or myself were among them. Books of engravings, or works light and graceful as Edith herself, composed the greater number; some few of another sort there were, but not many. A

handsome, grand piano occupied one side of the apartment.

"At least, he has acknowledged my superiority here," I thought. "I will try if the spell yet works;" and, with the thought, I rose and opened the instrument. Amy was deep in some book that she had casually taken up, and did not heed my movement.

I sat down and ran over the richly-toned notes; then I tried my voice. Yes, I was still the Nourmahal; the spirit of song was mine, and of that no Edith could deprive me. I possessed a gift by means of which I could even sway the soul of Mr. Annesley. Oh, how I revelled in it! Even in the midst of all that luxury heaped up for the gratification of Edith, I had discovered, too, that it was not by the influence of mental power her throne was established; even in worshipping her, he tacitly owned my superiority there; and, if his mind acknowledged my power, I possessed a charm by which I could also sway his soul I believed.

I did not stop to analyze these feelings at the time, I simply yielded to them, and revelled in my triumph. Song after song, in the loftiest style of exultation was poured forth; another

gift was suddenly mine, I could improvise. Amy sate in silent wonder ; it was the first time she had heard me exercise this talent, or known that I possessed it. And still I went on, afraid to cease, lest the gift should be resumed as suddenly as it had been given.

Presently, the door opened behind where I sate, and a shadow fell on the piano ; I raised my eyes as I ceased to sing, and—my father was standing by my side ! I looked round, expecting to see Mr. Annesley, but he was not there. My father answered my look. Mr. Annesley, he said, had recollected some directions he wished to give just as they were coming upstairs ; he would meet us in the library in half-an-hour. “ But, Mabel, how is this ? ” he went on, “ I could not believe it was *your* voice we heard, why have you concealed this talent, and how long have you possessed it ? ”

I knew not what reply to make ; all my triumph had turned to dust in a moment. Of what use was the faculty I had discovered, if he who owned its influence knew at the same time his own weakness, and how to elude my power ? I closed the piano with a laugh, saying I supposed the genius of the room had inspired me, and has-

tened to draw his attention to the luxury and refinement around. Amy made some disparaging remark on my vocal acquirements which fell harmlessly on my ear ; and she and my father were soon engaged in examining the beautiful engravings and objects which lay scattered about, till at last the latter reminded us that time was passing, and our host would be expecting us.

The tea-things were on the table, when we entered the library ; and we found Mr. Annesley standing at the window apparently in deep contemplation of the scene beyond. He asked Amy to preside at the tea-table, and she was rapturous in her admiration of the Bower-rooms. We all sate round the table ; and, as Mr. Annesley listened to her words, he leaned with his arms crossed upon it, and a smile of doubtful import playing over his face.

“And you have nothing to suggest, then,” he said at last, looking up as Amy ended, “you think the cage worthy of the bird?”

Amy replied that “she should think a bird of any plumage must be content with such a cage, and such a piano,” she added, “and Edith is so thoroughly mistress of the instrument.”

“Yes,” he said, “it was a first rate instru-

ment," and then he added after a momentary pause, "she was quite right, nobody could exceed Edith in her perfect mastery of it."

There was a peculiar emphasis in the last words, which stung me. My father launched out in praise of my singing; he said Mr. Annesley had proved himself right, and formed a juster estimate of my powers than he had done, his own foresight had been at fault there.

Mr. Annesley looked across the table to me with one of his gentle and peculiar smiles, and said he was glad to find his little friend appreciated at last.

The smile was sweet and welcome, but the words did not altogether please me. I moved away to the table near the window, and was soon immersed in a volume of the *Gerusalemme* that I found there. Conversation went on among the rest, but I did not notice what passed, till my attention was attracted by Mr. Annesley's voice speaking in answer to something my father had remarked.

"Yes," I heard him say, "he was indeed passionately fond of music, it might truly be called suffering, to love it as he did, and to find so few who could give him satisfaction, so that

even when he did meet with such, he feared to yield to the fascination."

My thoughts carried on a sequel to this speech, and I lost what was farther said; and then the book before me rivetted my attention once more, and I was following the beautiful ideas so sweetly expressed, when a hand reached over my shoulder; and, pointing to some lines, Mr. Annesley read them in those soft low accents which always so thrilled my heart. "Poor Tasso!" he said, after the silence produced by the words had lasted a minute, "we hardly sufficiently commiserate his sorrows, feeling as we do, that perhaps without them he would not have been the sweet, tender poet he was."

"Why should all our deepest and strongest feelings bear the mark of sorrow on them?" I asked, following the train of my own thoughts, more than speaking to Mr. Annesley's words.

"Probably because such feelings have no resting-place on earth," he answered, "they are but aspirations after a happiness that we daily see cannot be satisfied here below."

"Yet," I went on, "with regard to Tasso, the greater part of those who relate his story, agree that, though his love could not be rewarded, it was

-

fully returned ; and ought not that to be sufficient happiness ?”

“ Whenever you love, Mabel,” he replied, with a sad smile, “ you will find that such an ethereal state of things cannot exist in this planet. Love seeks union with the beloved ; here I imagine it can never have perfect satisfaction ; it only exists as a type of that higher and more perfect love which we shall know hereafter, even as marriage itself is only a type.”

I sighed involuntarily, as I replied, “ Perhaps then those who, like Tasso, are not happy in their earthly affection, may in reality be the most enviable ; as, like him, their hearts may be led to look upward and onward.”

“ It is very possible that even such domestic happiness as we can know here, may have the effect of making our affections too earthly if unwatched ; at all events I think you, Mabel, are not one who requires to be crossed in love, as the saying is, to purify and elevate your heart ; and I hope the trial may never be yours, for it is a very bitter one,” he added, in a lower tone. But he continued, a moment after, with a change of voice, “ I must not keep you here, discussing the heart’s affections ; Amy is already putting on her bonnet, and Mr. Willoughby bade me tell you to follow

her example ; he is gone on, himself, to have a word with Fenton's wife at the Lodge, who is suffering from what she calls rheumatiz."

Mr. Annesley walked home with us. "My sister and Edith come to-morrow, Mabel," he said, as he shook hands with me at the Rectory-gate, "but I trust their presence will not make you such a stranger to the Grange this year, as you were last. My sister is not formidable ; and in the library you need never fear interruption ; there you are undisputed queen you know."

Yes, I felt it was so, over the mind, but not over the heart ; and I sighed as I thanked him, and muttered something about coming soon to see Miss Annesley and Edith ; and then I ran towards the house ; while, after lingering a moment, and giving me a nod as I turned at the door once more, he closed the gate and went homewards.

CHAPTER XI.

Je trouvais dans cette pauvreté la chose la plus respectable que j'eusse jamais vue de ma vie. . . . A quel fil donc tiennent les quelques bonnes ou grandes pensées qu'un homme a dans sa vie, puisqu'elles tombent à de si petits chocs, de si petites choses, et de si petits intérêts."—ALPHONSE KARR.

THE next morning brought us unexpected visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Forster, with one or two of the juvenile members of the family, in an open carriage, accompanied by Miss Forster and her brother on horseback. Such an inundation of gay people, occasioned no small sensation in a moderate household like ours, the more so as being early visitors, the sensation on their part was likely to be that of hunger. To Amy, therefore, as housekeeper, the apparition was fraught with consternation dire ; and, leaving me to do the honours, she made a hasty retreat through the window, in order to hold a council of ways and

means as to how sufficient luncheon could be provided for this flight of locusts.

I believe at all times we are apt to consider that the part allotted to ourselves, is just the very hardest to bear in the world ; so, in the present instance, I would willingly have undertaken the duties of the commissariat department, could I have been spared the infliction, terrible to one of such a shy temperament, of having to receive our stylish guests, who seemed to pour into our small room interminably ; whilst I was doomed to undergo every degree of patronage from the languid affectation of the only semi-refined lady-mother, through the more eager and demonstrative manners of the daughter, the overpowering bluster of the father, to the pert conceit of the two children. It was quite a relief to encounter their brother, who came in a few minutes later, having gone round with the horses to the stables, and who in passing through public schools and college, had rubbed off the newness of the lately acquired lacquer, and learned better to find his proper level in society.

Mrs. Forster affected to be charmed with all she saw ; “ she had not had time on a former occasion to look about her ; indeed, there were so many interesting young creatures present who

claimed her attention, besides that dear Mrs. Aubrey and her handsome son; by the bye, did I know if he were likely to be at home soon? She knew we were very intimate—*very* intimate," she repeated with a languid smile, "so probably I knew something about his movements."

I replied, without affecting to remark her inuendo, "that I had heard Mrs. Aubrey say she hoped Clarence would be able to get leave very soon, but I knew nothing more certain."

"It must be such an anxious life for his poor mother," Mrs. Forster remarked, "I am so thankful that my dear boy never thought of the army; and, indeed, as Mr. Aubrey is one day to be the Earl of Ottersee," and the word came out with an air of dignity, "I cannot imagine how she entertained the idea of his entering the profession."

I said, laughing, "that in these piping times of peace, I did not think it showed Spartan heroism in Mrs. Aubrey to see her son don a red coat, as the greatest danger probably he had to encounter, was that of too much leisure."

The lady turned from me with a scornful sigh of pity, as she remarked, "that of course, I could know nothing of a mother's anxieties," and then

putting up her eyeglass, with a sudden change of tone, she said, as she glanced round the room,

"This is really a perfect—" the word appeared to have escaped her ; for, after a moment's hesitation, she went on, "quite a bird's nest, such a contrast to what we are accustomed to, that it is quite refreshing !"

"I like our own beautiful rooms much better," suggested one of the juveniles, with a toss of the head.

"Hush, my love !" exclaimed the mother, "you should never make comparisons ; this is only a parsonage, you know," I thought Mrs. Forster must have forgotten her own comparison of a moment before.

Just then my father entered ; and, after a general greeting had been exchanged, he and Mr. Forster fell into county and political subjects, and were lost to the rest of the company. Meanwhile, Amy having made her arrangements, had joined us and was now in conversation with the young lady whose mind had been so astonished by the antiquity of our fashions, and the rusticity of our employments. Mr. Sholto Forster had seated himself at a small table, on which lay a drawing-book of Amy's, of which he was busily turning the leaves ; his sister went up to him, and pre-

sently her brother asked Amy if those drawings were hers?

"Oh, mamma, do look at these!" Miss Forster exclaimed, on hearing Amy's affirmative reply, "these are Miss Willoughby's drawings; such beautiful things!"

"I dare say, my dear," was the languid reply, "you must ask Miss Willoughby to come to Brackenhurst, and see yours."

"Oh but, mamma," continued the young lady, "these are such beautiful drawings in water-colours, I cannot do anything like these."

"At least, you ought!" said her mother. "You have had every advantage that money can supply, so you ought to excel, and indeed, Mr. Zeichner assures me you do. He is a first-rate master, Miss Willoughby, but very expensive; I conclude you did not learn of him?"

Amy disarmed the sarcasm by appearing not to see it, and answered that she had never received any instruction beyond what her governess could give. The stare which Mrs. Forster fixed on her, seemed intended to express a doubt of this assertion; but, before anything more could be said, luncheon was announced, and the party filed into the dining-room, with every symptom of satisfaction.

Phœbe had done wonders ; happily she was one of those who are equal to any emergency, and endowed with a sufficient degree of pride and interest in her master's family, to make her worthy to have been a descendant of Caleb Balderstone himself.

There was plenty, and elegance, and what was wanting in plate, was made up in flowers, which gave equal, if not greater refinement, to the repast. After the more material requirements were satisfied, the floral ornaments began to attract notice.

"You must have a first-rate gardener, Mr. Willoughby, to supply you thus," Mrs. Forster remarked. "With all our conservatories and forcing-houses, we can never make such a show !"

"The gardener is not far from you, Mrs. Forster," my father replied, smiling, and pointing to me, "Mabel is very proud of her skill in that department."

Mrs. Forster opened her eyes, and I noticed that, perhaps, almost involuntarily, they fell upon my hands, which, instead of being coarse, as she doubtless expected, were better shaped than those of her own daughter.

"I wish you would take example by Miss Mabel, Bella !" exclaimed Mr. Forster, in his bluff,

consequential manner, "it would save me a good round sum yearly in gardener's wages. But where are your green-houses, Willoughby? for these are not all garden-flowers," he said, looking closer at them.

"At the Grange, I believe," replied my father, laughing, "for Mabel and the Beechley gardener are close allies."

"By the bye, Miss Willoughby," interrupted Mr. Sholto Forster, "who is that beautiful girl that spent last summer there?"

"Miss Marsh, Edith Marsh, I suppose you mean," Amy answered. "I believe she is a ward of Mr. Annesley's, but I know no more, except that she is as pleasing as she is beautiful."

"Which is saying much," he replied, "I hope she has not shared the fate which Moore pronounces upon all fair things, but that we shall have another glimpse of her this summer."

"Report says," observed his mother, "that she is likely to become more than ward to Mr. Annesley, which is possible enough, for they say she is an heiress, and he must want something of the sort to patch his broken fortunes, poor fellow!"

"Well," said my father, "I don't think Mr. Annesley can be classed among fortune-hunters,

at all events, nor, indeed, is there any reason why he should be one."

"Perhaps not," Mr. Forster remarked, "but without being a hunter, he may have no objection to pick up a fortune that falls at his feet."

"Were I Mr. Annesley," observed his son, "I would rather be the owner of Beechley Grange alone, with the consciousness of fortune lost through the loyalty and good faith of my ancestry, than seek to restore a fallen house by the aid of a rich wife, though I own to regain some of the family property is a temptation, if it could be so recovered."

"Which some of it certainly could not," observed his father with a boastful air, "Brackenhurst, at least, can never belong to an Annesley again, as long as there is a Forster in the world."

I am afraid at that moment I could not be said to be guiltless of the sixth commandment; at all events, it would have given me sincere pleasure could I have annihilated the whole Forster family, and replaced Mr. Annesley in possession of Brackenhurst.

"But, my dear Miss Willoughby, we are making an unconscionable visit," said Mrs. Forster, in her languid tones, "and I really must be allowed to order the carriage. Sholto will save you

the trouble," she said, extending her hand as I rose to ring, "and now I must come to the principal object of our visit, which was, to request that Mr. Willoughby would spare you and your sister to us for a few days the week after next ; we have some young friends coming, and hope to be able to make it pleasant," she added, with feigned humility.

Amy objected that, during the absence of my aunt, it was not fair to leave my father quite alone ; but the latter put that aside by assuring her that his church and his parish always gave him occupation enough to keep him from dullness, even if his friend, Annesley, were not at hand to drive off the fiend's approaches. So, it was agreed that we should go.

"And I shall send the carriage to fetch you, my dears," condescendingly added the lady, as we stood at the door, and the party drove from the Rectory.

"I wonder who will be there?" was Amy's comment, as the carriage party receded from our view, and we turned away into the house, "I don't know who are their acquaintance about here ; in fact, there is no one but the Aubreys, and Annesleys, and Mrs. Mainwaring, except they take in the Winterford people."

"That would be too great a condescension," I said, "except the denizens of the Close, there is no one in Winterford who is not in some business or profession, and the Forsters are too near the ground themselves, to venture upon noticing those who still toil upon it."

"They need not be so proud," retorted Amy, with a toss of her bright curls. "There are Winterford people greatly their superiors, I can tell them!"

"Videlicet, the Claytouns," I replied, rather maliciously.

"Well, the Claytouns, if you please," she said, as if making an admission, "they have, at least, no assumption, and Percy is far more agreeable and courteous than that Sholto Forster, with all his airs."

"I think he is the one member who does not take airs upon himself, with, perhaps, the best right to do so," I replied warmly, for his support of Mr. Annesley, and admiration of his ancestry, had had its effect upon me.

"Oh, I cry you mercy!" Amy returned, with a merry laugh, "I did not know my grave sister aimed at being Lady of Brackenhurst; but have a care Mabel, how you fly at such game, for it strikes me he is winged already," she continued

playfully. "Let me see, what chance would you have against the blooming Edith? Imprimis, dark violet eyes, deeply set; item, a pale, broad brow; item, a tolerably well-shaped nose; item, a delicately-chiselled mouth and chin; item, a figure tall, slender, and graceful; item, well-shaped hands and feet. There, my dear, there's a catalogue of your beauties. Now let us set this beside those of the Hebe, Edith—"

"Spare me the comparison, Amy," I exclaimed, putting my hand upon her mouth, "the only charm could be in the perfect contrast; but, indeed, I am not ambitious, nor disposed to covet the possession of Brackenhurst, at least, not saddled with the encumbrance of the heir of all the Forsters."

"Very well, then I must away to thank Phœbe for the very efficient manner in which she executed my behests as to the luncheon, and to see how the cold baked meats will furnish forth a respectable dinner for ourselves."

"Meanwhile, I warn you that I shall commit a raid, and carry off some of the scraps for my own particular friends; there is something there which will make old Adam and his wife a princely dinner."

It was a delightful afternoon for a walk, and

having filled my basket, I set off along the breezy Downs, which overlooked the sea, and led to the fisherman's cottage. I had not been there since the day that the tide had nearly overtaken me on my return, and I had much to listen to from the old people. There had been a prevalence of cold, easterly winds ever since, and poor Molly's rheumatism was not improved by them. But the "good gentleman from the Grange" had been to see them, and had brought her such a beautiful warm jacket, made by Miss Edith's own fair hands, so that she had not been half so bad as she might have been.

"And we did not forget to tell Mr. Annesley how good you was in coming to see us, Miss, and how you was always bringing something for the old folk, and Mr. Annesley made answer, and said you was a dear, good young lady—"

"Hush, Molly! I don't want to hear what Mr. Annesley said, and I wish you would not speak of me to him."

"Well, Miss, I hope no offence, but it is he as always begins it, and them was his very words—"

"Very likely, Molly, but I want now to hear what Adam has to say about this curiously-deformed shell; where did you find it, Adam?"

"Well, Miss," the old man replied, "it was the

very day you was here last. I was some how fearing you might be caught by the tide, for it was running in quickly by cause of the inshore wind that day. So I says to the old woman, says I, I'll walk along and see if Miss is all right, when just as I came to the Pear-bath, Miss, there lay this shell before me. I thought you must have dropped it, for it lay just in the path, and you could hardly have passed without crushing it. So I picked it up and kept it for you; and, when Mr. Annesley come the other day, I shewed it to him, seeing it was something curious; and he said it was a deformed Pholus, and you should send it up to London, and you might get a sight of shells, in exchange; but it was strange you should have missed it, Miss," Adam repeated.

"It was stupid at all events, Adam, and I have certainly no right to the shell, but now I have to thank you for your care of me. The fact was, I was not looking for shells at all that day, and was too deep in thought, I suppose, to see it. It is certainly your's, and, if Mr. Annesley thinks you can get anything by it, it shall be your's, for I can lay no claim to it."

"Then I don't know who has a better claim," exclaimed the old people in chorus, and Molly went on, "Mr. Annesley said—"

"Well, good bye, Molly," I exclaimed, rising quickly, "I have no time for gossip now, so you must keep the shell, Adam, till I come again, and then we will see what can be done."

"Nay, it's your's Miss," the old man persisted, "what could be the use of such things to the like of us? I only care for what I've got, because they remind me of places I've been to; and sure for the matter of value, what you give to me and to my old woman is worth it all, over and over again, may God bless you for it!"

"Thank you, Adam," I said, as I stood in the doorway, "you have given me more in those last words than I have given you in my whole lifetime; so, good bye, till I come this way again."

I ran quickly along the brow of the hill, singing in the gaiety of my heart, stopping every now and then to mark the progress of one huge wave, as it reared its crest far out at sea, and came undulating and swelling onwards to the shore, sometimes rising up as if to break, and then as the white foam sparkled on its edge, sinking back again into a mere swell. I could not help pondering upon this wave, speculating on the distance whence it had come, the shores it had passed, the ships it had either helped to overwhelm or to speed forward on their course. I remem-

bered Adam had told me, that every third and tenth wave would always be one of these monsters, and then I thought of the mystery involved in numbers ; and, while I stood thus watching and speculating, the mass of water came surging onwards, writhing, and swelling, and lifting its dragon-like crest, as if opening its vast jaws to devour the land, when a mightier hand arrested its progress, and it fell with a heavy plunge upon the shore, drawing back the sand and shingle in its recess with a roar and hissing metallic noise, then with a sound like thunder, it ran along the coast as far as the eye could reach, and the sublime words occurred to me :—

“The flood have lift up their voice, the flood lift up their waves.”

“The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly, but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier.” And, as with the waves of the sea, so it is with the waves of trouble ; they, too, have their appointed bounds which they cannot pass, when He hath said, “hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.”

I walked on slowly, meditating in the same strain, and thinking what folly it was to disquiet myself about things that, after the lapse of a few years, would probably, even in this life, appear such

very trifles ; and certainly when looked at from eternity, would seem but as the grains of sand on the shore I then looked down upon, each filling the place allotted to it, and accomplishing what it was sent to do, though presenting from that distance only one compact smooth surface—when the sound of wheels on the land side, immediately below the path, broke in upon my lucubrations ; and, turning towards it, I saw a fly with luggage upon the roof, and at the window a face, which even at that distance I could distinguish as that of Edith Marsh. Like the sand that I had just been contemplating, when dispersed to the four quarters by a strong wind, so were scattered all my moral reflections and sage meditations, and my shoreless heart was overwhelmed at once by the monster wave of an unexplained sorrow, which in that moment burst over it ; and, with a slow and uncertain step I continued silently my homeward walk.

CHAPTER XII.

"I have dressed thy cage with flowers!
'Tis lovely as a violet bank
In the heart of forest bowers.

"My home is high amidst rocking trees,
My kindred things are the star and the breeze,
And the fount unchecked in its lonely play,
And the odours that wander far away!"

HEMANS.

It was the day after the Forsters' visit; the weather was become delightful now, those terrible east winds which always kept Miss Annesley away from us through the early spring months had quite subsided, and soft breezes from the south and west, with mild genial showers had brought forward vegetation, fulfilling the old saying that,

April showers
Bring May flowers.

My father had been engaged all day with Mr. Annesley, and had sent word home that he should

dine at the Grange, so Amy and myself walked thither in the evening to see Miss Annesley and Edith on their return. Just as we were entering by the iron gates, which opened from the village, we heard the tread of a horse behind us. I was a step or two in advance of Amy ; and, with my hand on the lock, when hearing the animal stop, and Amy's voice speaking to the rider, I turned, and to my surprise saw her in earnest conversation with Percy Claytoun. I was greatly astonished, first at his being at home again so soon, and more so at the rapid eagerness with which, bending down from the saddle, he was talking ; Amy's face I did not see, but her head was downcast, and her manner troubled. He noticed me as I turned round, and resuming in a moment his upright position, he raised his hat with his usual graceful self-possession, saying aloud to Amy, " I think I have delivered my sister's message faithfully ; it is a charming evening for a walk, but I shall be late for dinner, so adieu ! " and, with another bow, he rode quickly on.

Amy's face still wore a look of perplexity as she joined me, and we walked on a few steps without speaking : at last, to break the awkwardness of the silence, I said, " I was sorry Mr. Claytoun was at home again."

"And why should that trouble you, I wonder," Amy remarked rather stiffly.

"Only on her account," was my reply, "of course to me it could be of no consequence; but, under the circumstances, I thought it must be disagreeable to her, and was bad taste in him."

"You are mightily considerate," Amy said sneeringly, "but you need not vex yourself about me, Miss Prudence, and, for the matter of taste, I think Mr. Claytoun as good a judge as you are."

"Well, dear Amy," I began.

"Oh, keep your priggish airs for Mr. Annesley," she interrupted, shaking herself free from the arm that I had thrown round her shoulder, "I suppose you will go and tell him and all the rest of the world your delicate notions on the subject."

"I am not likely to volunteer information about what does not concern me, Amy," I said, "nor is any one, Mr. Annesley least of all, likely to ask questions on a matter of so little interest; I only thought of what you might feel when I spoke."

"You are a good little soul," she answered, putting her arm round and kissing me, "only a little too romantic to have been born in the nineteenth century. These life-long enduring attach-

ments that you read of in your favorite Tasso and others are exploded now. If a man makes an offer and is refused, he never thinks of pining away now-a-days, but goes home, eats a good dinner, and laughs at the idea of ever having been so 'spooney' as he calls it."

"So much the better for his digestion," I replied, "but I don't think I should like such total indifference. However, I know nothing about it, only so far, that the sweet faithful spirits of former days are more to my taste, and I have a notion that those who were so gentle and so tender in a lady's bower, had more of the metal that makes heroes in the field; you know it is a proper combination of the hard and soft metals that makes the finest toned bells. Gentleness and strength;

" 'Denn wo das strenge mit dem Zarte,
Wo starkes sich und mildes paarten,
Da gibt es einen guten klang.' "

"You are a romantic little simpleton, Mabel," Amy replied laughing, "and pick up odd notions in that gloomy old library. But here we are on the Terrace, and there are Miss Annesley and Edith in the summer-house, so we will forget Mr. Claytoun and the heroics, and see which can reach the stone steps first," and, with a bound, she started off for the race; but, however, she might

beat me in mental powers, the lithesomeness of my limbs gave me considerably the advantage in all feats of agility, and I had reached the top step before she had well arrived at the lowest.

"This is an eager greeting, indeed, girls!" exclaimed Miss Annesley as we entered. She was lying on a couch before the window which looked over the park, and busily engaged with a book. Edith was sitting on the window-sill, looking down into the water below. As we came in and Miss Annesley spoke, she jumped down quickly from her seat, and embraced us both eagerly, before we had time to take the hands which Miss Annesley extended to us.

"Oh, I am so glad you are come at last!" Edith exclaimed, "dear Dame Margaret," as she always called Miss Annesley, "has been reading with such provoking steadiness, and I have been thinking of all manner of things, and wishing for some one to impart my thoughts to."

"Why, my dear Mabel," said Miss Annesley, as after kissing Amy, she took my hand and drew me down on to the cushion by the side of her couch, "how you are grown and altered during these last six months! Ralph prepared me to expect an improvement, but hardly so great a one," and she passed her hand caressingly over

my head. They were pleasant words, and yet they did not please me ; I was only a child, then, in his thoughts, improved it is true, but still capable of greater improvement. It was only comparative. Bad, better—best was not there : would it ever come ?

“Thoughtful as ever, I see,” Miss Annesley went on smilingly, “always the *Pensieri stretti*, why are you not more like Amy and Edith, and others of your age, my child ?”

“Would—would you like me better, dear Miss Annesley ?” I stammered out, “if so, I wish I were more like others, but it would be difficult ; you know I have always been a solitary being, and I believe Mr. Annesley made me what I am ; so, if he has failed, it is a pity, and can only be from the badness of the material.”

Miss Annesley laughed, “I did not pronounce you a failure at all, Mabel : on the contrary, I think you improved ; but there is another of Ralph’s pupils,” she said, pointing to Edith, “who has certainly not imbibed any of his nature I think you will own.”

What a gleam of sunshine shot across my heart at that moment, as I looked at Edith ; but it did not emanate from her.

“Edith is a bright butterfly,” I said, thought-

fully, "but I don't give Mr. Annesley credit for the formation of her character, quite."

"You are right, Mabel," Miss Annesley replied, "she has seen comparatively little of my brother. It is I and others who have had most to do in her education. Perhaps he was right," she went on, in a kind of soliloquy, absently stroking my hair, "opposites are said to suit each other better than those whose characters assimilate more."

The quick movement with which I raised my head roused her from her slight reverie. Just then, Edith's arms were thrown round my neck.

"So you have seen my bower," she exclaimed, as I laughingly struggled to liberate myself from the strangling tightness of her embrace. "Amy tells me you have looked at every thing, tried the piano, in fact, taken the bloom off the whole, and deprived me of even the poor pleasure of exciting your envy by the display," she said, poutingly.

"Not quite, Edith," I said, "I am ready to give you as much envy as you like, for indeed, I think you a very enviable person to have such a cage prepared for your reception; and yet no—" and then I stopped.

"Ah, I see what you think," she put in, "it is but a cage, after all, a gilded one it is true, but no

wild denizen of the air likes even the suspicion of confinement."

"That was not my meaning at all, Edith," I answered quickly, "and I was wrong in using the word cage; I think your own term 'bower' far more appropriate, a fairy-like bower it is, and its charm is enhanced by the thought of the kindness which so studied your enjoyment."

"Then what was your reservation?" she persisted, "for that 'yet no' and pause meant something. Why won't you envy me?"

"Mabel thinks it wrong to envy any one," observed Amy, with a scornful laugh.

"Mabel thinks no such thing, Edith," put in Miss Annesley, "never mind Amy's laughter, Mabel."

"Well," I said, "my reservation meant that, with all the luxury and elegance of your bower, I would prefer the library with its old oak, and stiff-backed chairs—that was all, Edith."

"I might have known it," she answered laughing, "it is just what Gardie himself would have said."

"And lo! here he comes!" exclaimed Amy, "looking the very embodiment of the old library itself."

Edith clapped her hands, and laughed merrily,

as she ran to the door to meet Mr. Annesley and my father, who were sauntering slowly along the Terrace, still in conversation.

"Oh, you dear grave old thing!" she exclaimed, as they ascended the steps; and, running forward, she put her arm under his, and linked her hands together over it, "we were this moment talking of you."

"That is comfortable, at least," her guardian replied, looking down upon the pretty face turned up to him, with one of his sweet smiles, "for according to the popular belief then, I shall not die this year. Ah, Amy," he went on, extending his disengaged hand, "and Mabel, I hope my little humming-bird has done the honours decorously."

"She has done no honours at all, Gardie," Edith said, "and moreover, she was on the point of quarrelling with Mabel, when you and Mr. Willoughby appeared."

He turned with a look of inquiry towards me.

"Nay," Edith went on, "I shall not allow her to tell her own story, or I know my condemnation is spoken; indeed, we will talk about that another time, but now, I have something to propose, to which, Gardie, you must give your undivided attention, and must not say me nay."

"Annesley is not the man I take him for, if he can refuse a proposal from such pretty lips," said my father, laughing.

All joined in the laugh, and I was silly enough to colour as I met a glance from Mr. Annesley rapidly darted in my direction.

"It is my place to receive proposals *for* you, not *from* you, Edith," he answered gaily, "is it anything of that sort you have to communicate?"

"If so, it must be from some wandering satyr in the park," she replied, laughing, "for I have no chance of any other proposal of the kind you mean in these solitudes; and, bye the bye, solitude is the cue."

"I see we must hold a conclave," Mr. Annesley said with mock gravity, "pray be seated, Mr. Willoughby, and Amy, and now you must not seek to prejudice the president thus, Edith, so stand forth and make your proposal in form, Margaret will let me lean here upon the back of her couch," as he placed her at a distance and took up the position indicated, which was just opposite to where I sate.

"This is a solitude," he went on, making a motion of the hand to all present, "I hope the compliment is observed and appreciated." Edith

looked vexed, Miss Annesley turned to her brother and said :

“ I think you are a little too hard upon Edith, Ralph ; she did not mean solitude in that sense.”

“ Only in the absence of admirers,” interposed Amy.

The pretty lips were beginning to pout ominously.

“ I think you are all unkind to the little humming-bird ; you ought to know that even nectar palls if a fresh bottle is not sometimes opened,” I said, laughing.

“ Apropos to ginger-beer,” exclaimed my father, “ Mabel has shown us the step from the sublime to the ridiculous.”

The humming-bird was assuming a more ruby tint ; I looked imploringly at Mr. Annesley ; he rose from his leaning posture, and, changing the amused smile he had hitherto worn into a look of seriousness, he came round, and taking Edith’s hand, seated her beside him on the opposite couch.

“ I see,” he said, smiling kindly, “ the judge must be also interpreter. We ought to have a little gaiety, Edith, that is it, is it not ? This dingy old Grange, with an invalid friend and a musty old guardian, is but a dull cage for a bird of such gay plumage.”

She looked up with a bright smile, "That was just what Mabel called my bower, Gardie," she said, "you always hit upon the same ideas."

He did not look at me now, but kept his eyes upon her face with rather a grave air as he answered, "That is no wonder, Edith, when Mabel has imbibed so many of her ideas from the same library where I picked up mine, but I think this is beside the question."

"Question, question ! order, order !" cried my father.

"Well then, Gardie," she said, looking up at him, "could not you do like the rest of the world, and invite people, some of the neighbours, I mean."

"Well, I think it is possible, Edith," he answered, affecting an air of consideration, "who shall we ask ? Have you any preferences ?"

She laughed one of her merry laughs, as she replied, "it would be difficult to have preferences where there is none to prefer, no ! let us ask everybody."

"It is a wide field, Edith," he remarked, "suppose we look into the matter a little closer ; you want society, now the word society I think you will see defined by Johnson as 'the union of many in one general interest,' and we, English, giving

a particular name to that general interest, call it 'eating,' hence, in our language, society means dinner-parties, or eating."

"You are in a strange mood this evening, Ralph," observed his sister.

"Dear Dame Margaret, do come to my help, and tell him what I want," said Edith.

"Softly, Edith," he went on, "you have only heard the preamble of my plan, wait for the development. Now dinner-parties or eating not being, I conclude, adapted to the pleasures of a humming-bird, who, as Mabel has just said, lives upon bottled nectar, (quere pale ale?) suppose we give a different object to the general interest, not altogether leaving out the eating, but making it a secondary affair, and think of some other amusement as the main business of the day."

"Archery!" exclaimed Edith, starting up and clapping her hands, "charming! we used to have such nice archery-parties at Penzance, did we not, Madama? and I have such a love of a dress, dark green, myrtle green silk, with black facings, and a large sombrero, with a long drooping feather, looped up on one side."

"A complete little rifleman," observed Mr. Annesley, looking at her with an amused smile, "how run the votes! what say you, Amy?"

"That I like the sketch well enough, but I don't think either Mabel or myself know much about the art."

"Then, there will be the better chance for me," Edith said, laughing, "you know, Gardie, there must be prizes, really good, handsome prizes."

"Well," Miss Annesley observed, "I think I could make an amendment. An archery-party, I know, is to be given by the Forsters after next week, suppose we substitute a dinner and charades."

"Better still," exclaimed Edith, "I would not follow any lead of those vulgar Forsters, and I know some capital charades; we used to act them last winter with the Trevanions, and I have all my dresses ready."

"You seem to be armed at all points," remarked her guardian, "but you forget there are others to be thought of, Edith."

Amy declared she should like charades of all things. I replied that it would be delightful to see them, provided I had not to act; and, as my father did not disapprove, it was settled that a committee should be formed, who should meet next day for the discussion of preliminaries.

"In the meantime, it is getting dusk," Miss Annesley remarked, "and I think we ought to be moving homewards."

"Margaret is afraid that the 'Dark Ladie' will be taking her walk soon," Mr. Annesley said.

"The 'Dark Ladie!'" we all exclaimed, "who was she? and when, and where, and why did she walk?"

"Is it possible that you have never heard of the Dark Ladie of Beechley Grange?" asked Mr. Annesley, "it is one of the oldest legends belonging to the place, and this the fittest place to hear it in, for this terrace is the scene of her nightly perambulations. But are you not afraid of the dews, Margaret? I fear it is too late for you to be out?"

Miss Annesley said the sky had been so overclouded all day, that she did not think there would be a drop of dew to be felt; but, as a precaution, she would ask little Mabel to close the window, "and, with all these wraps," she said, "it will be impossible for any air to reach me as I go home, so pray begin, Ralph, it is so long since I heard the tale, that it will almost have the charm of novelty even for me."

“Well then,” he said, pretending to throw an anxious glance down the Terrace, “listen while I relate the legend of ‘The Dark Ladie of Beechley Grange.’”

CHAPTER XIII.

"Who called thee strong as death, oh love,
Mightier thou wast, and art."

HEMANS.

"Such change, and at the very door
Of my fond heart, hath made me poor."

WORDSWORTH.

"Passa la bella Donna, et par che dorma."

TASSO.

The Legend of the Dark Ladie of Beechley Grange.

"It was centuries ago, in the time of the Wars of the Roses; Sir Reginald Annesley was the then owner of the Grange, which was little more than a fortified and moated house, with drawbridge and portcullis, and all the necessary paraphernalia of that period of 'Glorious War.'

"The only sister of Sir Reginald had married Lord Calvers." Edith, at that word, gave a violent start and looked up as if she were going to speak,

but, drawing her back with a quiet smile, Mr. Annesley went on.

“When the disturbances broke out, this Lord Calvers had declared himself on the side of the Yorkists. Of course, this had effectually separated the brother and sister, as the Annesleys were Lancastrians ; and, since a short time after her marriage, they had never met. Calvers, however, in those troublous times had to sustain more than one siege, and in the last of these its lord had been killed, and his widow with her young daughter, an only child, had fled for refuge to the Grange. Lancastrian as he was, Sir Reginald could not refuse the shelter of his roof to his only sister, but she did not want it long. Fatigue and exposure, and fear and grief had done their work already, and she died the same night, bequeathing her child, the Lady Blanche, heiress of the Barony and lands of Calvers, to the guardianship of her brother.

“Sir Reginald had one son, about six years younger than the Lady Blanche ; and, in spite of his Lancastrian principles, the old man coveted the broad lands of Calvers, and, when he saw that Ralph loved his cousin, he forebore to interpose, ‘She is but a girl,’ he argued mentally, ‘Yorkist and Lancastrian, what are such names to her ? ’twill be easy to bring her up in our own principles, and

Calvers is worth adding to our cause.' Thus years wore on, and every year found the Lady Blanche more lovely and loveable.

"Fair she was, as the rose, the emblem of her party, with eyes of deep violet, and hair of ebon hue, falling in wavy folds below her slender waist. She always wore a robe of white, with a large scarf or veil of black lace thrown carelessly over her shoulders, and sometimes enveloping her head, somewhat after the fashion of Spanish dames. Her form was tall and slight, and her voice like the gentle murmurs of the south wind breathing over an Æolian harp. Beautiful she was with a queen-like beauty, and stately, but withal cold and proud.

"Ralph loved her with all the vehemence of his fiery nature; when as children they used to play in yonder old hall, and the gloom of evening had fallen, and the red fire smouldering on the hearth, threw up fitful gleams of light that seemed to kindle into life the armour which hung upon the walls, it was his delight to kneel at her feet, and tell her fearful tales of war and bloodshed, till she would hide her face in her dark mantle and weep mingled tears of pity and horror. He loved to bring home trophies of the chase as offerings to her; he collected the choicest flowers to deck her

bower, and sometimes he brought the spoils of those terrible civil wars to ornament her fair person. But at these she would never look, except to weep over them ; ‘ they had belonged to her own people,’ she said, and she turned coldly from them and from the spoiler.

“ Cold she was ever to him, in spite of his devoted ardent love. A secret sorrow seemed to prey upon her heart, and year by year as her beauty increased, it became at the same time more fragile. Yes, ardently he loved her ! they had grown together from childhood, for she was but nine years old when her mother had brought her to the Grange. His whole being was intertwined with hers ; he read her wishes and obeyed them ere they were formed into words, he basked in her eyes, he almost worshipped the very ground beneath her feet. Piteous it was to see such tender, yearning devotion bestowed on one so heedless of it ; for, in spite of all, she was no more to him than a beautifully chiselled statue, as fair and as lovely, but as cold and as hard.

“ Yet there was fire beneath that marble exterior, though it glowed not for Ralph ; fire that burned only the fiercer for the icy covering which concealed it ; fire that was consuming her own heart.

“Sir Reginald saw his son’s love for the fair Blanche, and ridiculed his fears. ‘What should a girl like that know about Yorkist or Lancastrian?’ he persisted; ‘was she not his ward and bound to obey his will?’ and he bade him be satisfied; ‘he had pledged himself to his party,’ he said ‘that Calvers should be their’s, and she should be Ralph’s wife on the day that she was twenty-one.’ But Ralph loved her too sincerely to wish to obtain by authority what he could not gain freely, and he besought his father not to be peremptory; ‘She cannot always resist the pleadings of my love,’ he urged, ‘at last, she must yield to such untiring constant devotion.’ Alas! he knew not that he had a rival.

“The estates of Lord Clifford adjoined those of Calvers; and, although he was many years older than the Lady Blanche, he had loved her from her cradle, with a constancy and depth not inferior to that of Ralph. He had not dared to seek her openly at the Grange, Yorkist as he was, but he had watched over and followed her, and no day passed without one hour of it being spent in her loved society. It was here, on this green terrace, that they met; every evening, as the dusky shadows fell upon the earth, he crossed the moat in a light canoe, which he kept concealed in a neighbouring

thicket, and passed one precious hour with his beloved. She made it a request to be allowed one hour of undisturbed solitude every evening after sunset that she might walk here, and Ralph, to whom her slightest desire was as a strong command, had always respected the wish.

“Anxiously the lovers waited till Blanche should be of age, that the Lord Clifford might openly claim her for his bride; they knew not the stern resolve of Sir Reginald, and trusted, with lover-like fondness, that their constancy must prevail over his wish to marry her to his son, nay over Ralph’s love itself.

“And now it wanted but one short month of the time that Sir Reginald had decreed for her marriage, when at the close of such a day as this, the Lady Blanche sought the usual trysting place. The sun had just sunk below yonder wooded eminence, and the dusk of evening was fast closing down. Slowly she paced the Terrace, up and down, now stopping to listen as a sound caught her ear, and she thought it was the boat of Lord Clifford on the water—it was but the rustle of a bird disturbed for a moment in the thick yew hedge; and again she resumed her lonely walk. Now she would stand; and, shading her beautiful eyes with her fair hand, peer out through the dusk, hoping to

discern the form of her lover. In vain ! deeper and deeper fell the darkness, and still he came not. A shudder ran through her veins ; what if some mischance had befallen him ? What if her cousin and he had met ? Slower and slower were her foot-falls, and every instant she interrupted her walk as the distant hoot of the owl, or the quick rise and fall of the night breeze fell upon her strained ear. Again she stopped to listen—surely that was a step ; no, it was but the beatings of her own heart, and sadly her anxious walk was once more resumed ; at last, another sound strikes her keen sense—she stops ; sight and hearing bent to the full stretch. Ah yes ! that was indeed the light dip of the oar as his skiff crosses the moat ; it is with difficulty that she suppresses a shriek of delight as she runs to the landing-place ; a moment, and the boat has touched the steps, and she is clasped in her lover's arms. At that same instant, another sound might have been heard ; a groan of mingled anguish and despair, as Ralph, uneasy at his cousin's unusually protracted absence had followed to protect her in case of need, and now came upon the Terrace.

“ But the lovers were too much engrossed to heed aught beyond each other. As the Lord

Clifford held her within his arm, after the first close embrace, and she looked up between smiles and tears into his face, and smoothed the long hair from his brow, and gently and lovingly chid him for his delay, and he gazed down upon that fair upturned face, and smiled at her fond chiding, and kissed away the words from her sweet lips, unsuspecting of the agonized spectator of their bliss, or the dark fate that was even now at his elbow—they were startled rudely from their fond dream, as in the harsh hoarse tones of rage and despair, Ralph exclaimed :—

“ ‘ Draw and defend yourself, villain ! for, dastard and robber as you are, I cannot slay an unarmed man.’ ”

“ It was in vain that Blanche threw herself upon the breast of her lover, and sought to shield him from the sword of Ralph, who tore her from his embrace, and placed her firmly, but still tenderly, on the steps of the summer-house. Another moment, and their swords had crossed ; and, as the Lord Clifford fell heavily to the ground, Blanche sprang forward, and, with a piercing shriek, flung herself on his body.

“ Gently, Ralph raised and bore her, fainting as he thought, to the house. He laid her upon one of the rude couches in the hall, knelt beside

her, chafed her cold hands, and gazed upon her pale features by the dim light. Oh horror! a stream of crimson runs from between those still, white lips! The spirits of Blanche and the Lord Clifford are united for ever.

"Sometime later, servants coming into the hall, found Ralph still insensible, with his lips glued to those of his cousin, by the blood which had long ceased to flow. They bore him to his chamber; but, though in course of time he recovered, and lived for many years, and even later in life married, he was never seen to smile again."

There was silence for a minute or two after Mr. Annesley had ceased to speak: even Edith's light spirit seemed quelled. At last, she passed her arm under his; and, looking up timidly into his face, said, in a voice but little above a whisper,

"Gardie, you spoke of Calvers, is not that—?"

"The name of your place, Edith," he replied, with a smile, as she paused in the unfinished question. "Our houses you see have been connected before as guardian and ward; but the property is your's now by female descent, and you bear another name."

"And so do you, Gardie, for Ralph was not the Lady Blanche's guardian: his father, Sir Reginald,

was that, and besides, we are not first cousins, only related in a remote degree."

"Most true, Lady of Calvers," he replied, looking down upon her as I had pictured to myself the young Lord Clifford smiling upon her fair ancestress.

"And if I were to die, Calvers would be yours," she persisted, "is it not so, Gardie?"

"Most incontrovertibly," he replied, still smiling on her anxious countenance, "but, as you say, I am not Sir Reginald, nor am I covetous, and so at least, I trust Calvers may never be mine," he added, more gravely, while she hid her face upon his shoulder, and whispered inaudibly to all but my strained attention, which heard, and saw, and understood with preternatural keenness,

"I would never be a Lady Blanche."

I saw him pass his hand caressingly over the fair head which nestled against his arm; I almost fancied he pressed her to him, but the twilight had now deepened into such gloom that imagination might have deceived me; the deep sigh that he heaved at the moment, however, was too audible to escape my ears, though it was almost at the instant changed into a light laugh, as putting her from him, and starting up with unusual quickness, he said,

“Come, Edith, you must not give way to foolish fancies; the legend is but one of a thousand very similar, no doubt, belonging to places, which, like the Grange, have had a long succession of owners. Look, Mr. Willoughby is already impatient of my long story, and you have allowed all care of Dame Margaret to devolve on Mabel,” and he came up to see that his sister was well cared for. There was a tenderness in his manner towards me, as he thanked me for my care of his sister, and a peculiar air of, almost, deference, which I had never observed in him before. Miss Annesley patted his cheek playfully, as he wrapped her shawl yet closer round her, and said,

“You have saddened us all to-night, Ralph; even Edith’s mirth is subdued, and Amy looks grave; I could tell a tale of a stray tear or two stealing from under those long lashes,” as she laid her hand on my shoulder, “only that that proud bridle shews me Mabel would not own ‘the soft impeachment.’”

I did not dare to look up, for I knew his eyes were upon me, and I thought there was pity, perhaps even a less endurable feeling, in his gaze; but, before Miss Annesley had ceased speaking, Amy, who had been standing at the door, turned round and asked,

"Mr. Annesley, does the Lady Blanche ever walk on this Terrace, now?"

"The legend would be but half a legend if she did not," he replied, laughing.

"Oh, Amy, what can you mean?" exclaimed Edith, pressing up to her, and speaking under her breath.

"Look there!" Amy said, pointing outwards. We all went to the glass-door, which Amy held half open.

"If you mean that dark object by the water-side, I am afraid I must disenchant you," Mr. Annesley said; "that is only Mr. Willoughby who wonders, no doubt, what is keeping us here so long."

"That is not what I meant," replied Amy, "though it might very well do duty for Lord Clifford, just landed from his boat. It was a white object that I saw: it is gone now; wait a moment."

"Oh, Amy, how you terrify me!" exclaimed Edith, half crying, and I could see that she had crept close to Mr. Annesley and caught his arm.

"Silly child," said he, "why Mabel and Margaret are the only sensible persons among you."

"There!" exclaimed Amy; and, in a moment,

all heads were thrust forward. Clearly there was a white object sailing majestically along by the yew hedge ; no form was distinguishable between the distance and the darkness ; and, without having had our imaginations excited by the story, it had a very ghost-like appearance.

"What is it, Ralph?" asked Miss Annesley, anxiously.

"What! Dame Margaret frightened?" he exclaimed, laughing, "nay then, Mabel and I are the only two who keep our senses."

"You must answer for yourself, Mr. Annesley," I replied, "why should you suppose me braver than the rest?"

"Because I have noticed that quiet spirit in other circumstances," he said, speaking very low, "and I think I know its firm courage."

"But, Gardie, look!" exclaimed Edith, clinging yet closer to him, and now fairly crying. "It is coming this way; oh! I never can cross that Terrace to-night; why did you tell us that story in this place?"

"Be calm, Edith," he said, with something of sternness in his tone, "there is nothing either feminine or interesting in such exaggerated timidity; and, as for what you see there, it is only a white owl out on a foraging expedition, for the

'wife and small childther at home,' " he added, imitating the accent and whine of an Irish beggar.

" Come, Edith," said Miss Annesley, good-naturedly, " Mr. Willoughby's patience will be quite exhausted ; have you courage to face the ghost with me ?" And she led the way down the steps.

" You are not angry with me, Gardie ?" asked the little beauty, half poutingly, as she looked up into his face.

" No, my brave Lady of Calvers," he answered, playfully, " so, prove your courage, and take care of Dame Margaret ; I see Amy has already reached her father. " Take my arm, Mabel," he said, turning to me, " and between such an advance and rear guard, I think our little humming-bird can have no cause for fear."

I put my hand within his arm hesitatingly, for I was fast losing all my accustomed boldness, and becoming foolishly timid with him.

" How you tremble Mabel !" he observed, looking down upon me, after we had gone a few paces, " but for my faith in your steadfast spirit, I should say you were even more fearful than Edith."

I hesitated a moment ; should I allow him to think me a silly, frightened creature, and so sink

voluntarily in his good opinion, or struggle yet to maintain the slippery ground I still held ; the decision was soon made.

"I am not frightened," I replied, while a still stronger shudder ran over me.

"Then you are cold," he answered, stooping, and trying to wrap my scarf closer round me, "and you have nothing but this flimsy thing." He looked round as if uncertain what to do.

"It was only a chill ran over me," I rejoined, trying to laugh it off, "a goose walking over my grave, as people say."

"Hush, hush, Mabel ; if you talk so, you will make a coward of *me*. How inconsiderate I have been !" Then, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him, "stop here a moment will you ? you will not mind being left, while I run back to the summer-house ?"

I assured him I had no fear, but entreated he would not take so much trouble, I really was not cold ; but, even while I spoke, he had rushed away, and oh ! how delicious it was to feel myself so cared for by him. Willingly, oh how willingly would I have laid down and died then, that my last consciousness might have been of that sweet solicitude ! But he was by my side again in little more than a second, bringing a large wrapping shawl

that was kept in the summer-house, for any impromptu use that it might be wanted for. He folded it carefully round me; and, though now I was fairly trembling in every limb, I stood passively and yielded to a charm that I knew in a few more paces must be dissolved.

"My poor Mabel, what would the Grange become if it were deprived of the choicest of its Penates?" It was murmured rather than spoken, and I dared not trust my voice to answer, for it would have betrayed the tears that were choking me; so I allowed him to wrap me up as if I were a mummy; and, when he had completed the work to his satisfaction, he took my hand, and, placing it once more upon his arm, he said:

"Now we will be at the house as soon as any of them," as leaving the Terrace by a side path, he took the shortest way home. He walked fast; perhaps he thought the brisk pace better for me, perhaps he was anxious to shorten the walk as much as possible. Neither of us spoke: for myself, I know it would have been impossible to talk on ordinary subjects; whether any such reason prevented him, or what caused his silence, I had no means of knowing. At all events, between the pace and the short cut he had taken, we overtook

our companions, just as they emerged from the shrubbery, and probably before they had missed us.

Edith laughed one of her merry laughs as we all entered the hall together, and she saw me folded up in what went by the name of the Terrace-wrap.

"How could you make such a mummy of yourself?" Amy cried out.

"And how are we to unroll it?" added Edith, as she stood laughing and clapping her tiny hands, while I was working diligently to disengage myself from the heavy folds, which were all held together by an enamelled pin set with small brilliants, which I noticed Mr. Annesley always wore.

Meanwhile, all the interest he had so recently shewn in me, seemed suddenly to have evaporated; he had crossed to the other end of the hall, where he stood talking with my father till now, when, just as I approached with the intention of restoring the pin, he turned away, and desiring a servant to take lights into the library, he carried my father thither, still engaged in conversation. For the first time, a something in his manner made me feel that I must not follow to the room which, heretofore, had been at all hours

as open to me, as if in truth it had been my own.

"It is useless attempting the library to-night, Mabel," Edith remarked, as I stood doubtful for a moment, whether to follow or return. "You are not wanted, you see; so you must come to my Bower, and we will have some music; Gardie brought me a packet of new pieces from Winterford yesterday, and we shall find Dame Margaret there on the sofa, I dare say." So, we all went upstairs; and, as we went, I carefully concealed the pin among the folds of my dress: I could not make up my mind to return it by the hands of either Edith, or Miss Annesley, and I thought an opportunity would surely occur of restoring it to himself, before we left.

Amy and Edith tried over the music, and played and sang, while I sate with a book of engravings open before me, and seemed to listen to the pieces they were trying, though, in reality, I was straining every nerve to detect the footfall so familiar to me, in the corridor, but no sound came; and when, after a time, Miss Annesley asked me to sing some of her brother's favourites, it was in vain that I tried to give out the sound which had so astonished even myself. The spirit of song had fled and forsaken me, and Miss Annesley

telling me I was not in voice to-night, said "it was not good to force it ; perhaps the evening air had made me a little hoarse, so I had better come and play a game of chess with her, and leave the piano to Amy and the humming-bird."

The evening wore on, and no Mr. Annesley made his appearance ; at last, my father came up to tell us it was time to go home, "Mr. Annesley," he added, "was so engaged writing letters of importance, that he had commissioned him to say good night to us."

Next day, when Fenton called with a basket of ripe fruit from Miss Annesley, and some of the newest verbenas to plant in my flower-garden, he told us that his master had started that morning by the first train for London.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Je ne sais si vous avez remarqué, comme moi, la puissance secourable que les petites choses tirent de leur petitesse même; peut-être n’avez vous pas en autant que moi d’occasions de vous reconnaître vaincu par elles.”—ALPHONSE KARR.

“ So, my dears, you are going to the Forsters to-morrow, I hear,” exclaimed Mrs. Mainwaring, as she rustled into our room a few days after the visit to the Grange, just described. “ Well, I am rather surprised that Mr. Willoughby should like you to be so very intimate there; but, of course, he must be sadly at a loss, poor man, without Mrs. Stanley.”

Amy ventured to suggest that, making a visit of a few days at a house, did not argue extraordinary intimacy. “ And besides,” she added, “ I don’t see anything so objectionable in the Forsters, except, perhaps, that Mr. and Mrs. Forster may be a little purse-proud.”

"Objectionable, my dear!" she echoed, "oh, no, of course not. I am not going to say a word against them; and, after all, I dare say your papa is a very prudent man, and knows what he is about. Sholto Forster is a charming youth: don't you think so, Mabel?"

I replied that he seemed gentlemanly and agreeable enough, and certainly free from all purse-proud vulgarity.

"That's right, my dear," she replied, laughing; "I see you are a most right-minded young lady, quite able to take care of yourself."

I said, "I hoped I was capable of so much prudence, but did not see the connection with Mr. Sholto Forster."

"Oh, you dear innocent!" she exclaimed, "what a good girl it is! Poor Clarence!—now there is a charming youth if you will; but perhaps you are right, Mabel; a rich commoner is better than a poor nobleman; so you have made a wise choice."

"But Mrs. Mainwaring," I said, "I have not been called upon to make a choice, nor am I likely to be. I like Clarence very much, and think Mr. Sholto Forster very pleasant."

"Good girl," she went on, provokingly, "you keep your own counsel well. But, really, I must think it very ridiculous in such people as the Forsters

presuming to take a lead in the county society ; people whose name was not known in the last generation, a man who has sprung from nothing, and can hardly speak English ! I am surprised at the Annesleys, too, truckling to them. I thought better things of Mr. Annesley ; I wonder he can like to see them stuck up in a place that ought to belong to him !”

“ Perhaps he does not like it,” Amy suggested, “ but, as the place has been lost to his family for many generations, it would be rather hard to quarrel with the Forsters because they have risen in the world, and he has fallen.”

“ Oh, I see you are all ready to worship Mammon,” Mrs. Mainwaring replied, “ but, much as you may think of Mrs. Forster, I have heard that she was nothing but a factory-girl when he married her, and could neither read nor write,” and she threw herself back, looking as if poor Mrs. Forster was utterly extinguished.

But a spirit of rebellion sprang up within me, and, in spite of her inuendoes, I was resolved not to see the Forsters crushed at a blow, particularly by one whose ancestry could hardly have been traced a generation back. So, I answered, if that were the case, it proved Mrs. Forster to have both tact and some degree of talent, since, with

the exception of the pride of purse, which I allowed, there was nothing to find fault with, either in her manners, or mode of speaking, and that the young people were, at least, well-educated."

"Poor Mabel! that's right, my dear, stand up for your friends," she said, sneeringly; "but just look at Mrs. Aubrey by her side: there's a gentleman born and bred, you may see it in a moment: but then the Knoll is nothing like Brackenhurst, I'll allow. However, she could never be intimate with such people as the Forsters, though, of course, they are on visiting terms."

"Yes," Amy remarked, "they certainly are, for Mrs. Aubrey is going to the archery-meeting at Brackenhurst, and spends the week there, and Clarence, too, is expected."

"Mrs. Aubrey, my dear!" almost shrieked Mrs. Mainwaring, "well, you do surprise me! I shall expect to hear next that I am going there myself!"

"And are you not going, Mrs. Mainwaring?" I asked, rather maliciously.

"Oh, no, my dear; I am rather too insignificant to be invited to Brackenhurst; Arden House, you know, is too small a place to be noticed by such great people."

"But you called upon them, Mrs. Mainwaring," Amy said.

"To be sure, my dear, I did, and was the very first to send them a dinner-invitation, and even took great pains to find out how their head gardener was robbing them, and to put Mr. Forster up to his dishonesty, and all I got in return was a civil hint that he did not want help in the management of his establishment. So, it will be long enough before I give myself any trouble for them again, though I could tell them how their second groom sells the oats and starves the horses, for Mrs. Suds, the washerwoman, told my gardener's wife, who told my maid—"

I could not help interrupting her, "Really, Mrs. Mainwaring," I said, "if Mr. Forster does not care about the delinquencies of his establishment, it is no business of our's; but I should be very glad if you would give us a few ideas on the more important subject of the fashion, that I might impart them to Jane Elliot, who is making us each a dress."

"Jane Elliot!" exclaimed Mrs. Mainwaring, horror-struck, "why, she is only a sempstress! My dears, what could possess you to put dresses into *her* hands?"

"I dare say it is very incorrect," Amy replied,

laughing, "and betrays great ignorance, but she is a very nice plain dress-maker, and papa wishes us to employ her, because she has a mother and sick sister to support; she makes very well from a pattern."

"Well, my dears, that is very praiseworthy, I have no doubt, so I will tell my maid to send you the last dress I had from Paris, and Jane may take the pattern. I wish you much pleasure in your visit, my dears, and be sure, in your archery, you hit the right mark," she said, laughing as she rose; and, shaking out her ample flounces, she managed to rustle through the space, which never looked small but when filled by the rich silks, or flowing muslins in which Mrs. Mainwaring was always attired for visiting.

As soon as she was gone, Amy burst into a violent fit of laughter.

"My dear Sir Isaac!" she exclaimed, calling me by the name that was not quite forgotten, "what could induce you to ask Mrs. Mainwaring for fashions? Imagine you and I tricked out in one of her Paris dresses, or our simple white muslins tortured into all those vagaries! above all, fancy poor little Jane Elliot with such a model before her: how puzzled she would be!"

— "Nothing could well be more absurd, Amy,

I quite agree with you," I replied, joining heartily in her merriment, "but it was the only thing that suggested itself at the moment, to break 'the linked sweetness long drawn out' of the washerwoman, and the gardener's wife, and the lady's maid, something like the 'house that Jack built.'"

"Well, and what are we to do with the wondrous conception, when it comes?" asked Amy.

"As we would with any other bore," I replied, "nay, even with the lady herself; get out of it what can be turned to good and discard the rest, wash a basket-full of sand and dirt for the sake of the few grains of gold we are sure to find at the bottom of it."

"Then, you really expect to get something useful out of this Parisian toilette?" Amy asked with a laugh.

"Well," I said, "probably Jane Elliot will: I do believe that some good is always to be got out of the most unlikely materials."

"O most profound philosopher, I am thy slave," Amy replied, with a mocking reverence, "truly thou art a fitting disciple of the Annesley school," and, humming the air of 'Le faccio un' inchino,' she ran out of the room, leaving me in a new

train of thought suggested by the name of Annesley. I was going to Brackenhurst to-morrow, and here was this pin, which I took out of my dress and looked at once more; for, in the daily hope of seeing him, I always carried it about me. What ought I to do with it? he was still in town; and, unless I gave it to Miss Annesley or Edith, I should be obliged to keep it probably till my return from Brackenhurst, and he might think I intended to appropriate the pin either for its own sake or his; of the two I would rather be thought the thief. Yet, I could not bear the idea of giving it into the care of any one else; it was foolish, no doubt, but it seemed like a link between us, a little mutual understanding not shared by others, and though, of course, there was nothing in it, I could not entertain the thought of giving it into the care of another.

It would necessarily lead to explanations, and then, all those little nothings so unspeakably precious to me, would be talked over and laughed at, and the tender down which gave such beauty to the butterfly-wing of memory, would be rudely rubbed off, and the bright and fluttering ephemeris be reduced to a mere common-place insect. So again, as had often happened before, the sparkling

little thing was turned over and examined, and once more consigned to its place in my dress. It cannot be long before he returns, I thought, and he must know that I have had no opportunity to restore it.

A day or two after, we were a part of the gay group assembled at Brackenhurst, surrounded by a great many strangers and a little knot of friends, among whom were Miss Annesley and Edith, Mrs. Aubrey and Clarence, the latter now expanded into the dignity of an officer in Her Majesty's service, though still retaining all the simplicity of his originally unaffected manner. The Claytons were there, too; and, the day after our arrival, Lord Ottersee and Lady Ruth joined the party.

I felt some curiosity to see how Clarence would comport himself between the lady who had been chosen for him, and the lady whom I could not but think he had chosen for himself, and for a time I felt some interest in looking on; but Clarence had acquired the manners of society, and it was difficult to penetrate the air of easy gallantry with which he paid a thousand little attentions to Edith, which might mean much or nothing, according to the interpretation put upon them; while, towards his cousin, he was full of a kind of courteous devotion, which might

be either rendered to her station and relationship, or offered as the homage of a betrothed lover, according as she chose to interpret it. He had certainly gained a wonderful amount of tact in his short intercourse with the world.

As to Edith, it was impossible to guess what were her feelings: no name was ever more appropriately bestowed than that of humming-bird on her. She seemed only to live in an atmosphere of sunshine and smiles; a dark cloud would have marred all the beauty of her changeful sheen, and a shower of rain utterly destroyed it. What a contrast she was to the Lady Ruth, retiring, gentle, and quiet in her manner, but cold, certainly, and rather repelling than courting advances! She seemed fond and proud of her cousin, but one hardly looked for much depth of affection under so icy an exterior; and yet, while thus judging her, my conscience smote me, for was not I too considered cold and repulsive, and was not the verdict utterly false?

In everything which Lady Ruth did and said, there was a measure of propriety that was sometimes quite oppressive. I have felt a wish to see her run down stairs, or tear her dress, or say something awkward and inconsequent, just to assure myself that that she was not a mere automaton.

But no, whatever she attempted, she did well, so far as it went, never rising to perfection, nor sinking below mediocrity ; consequently in all, there seemed an absence of soul which must have been cruelly felt by Clarence, who was such an admirer of that ingredient, and at the same time not one likely to look very far below the surface; while Edith, on the contrary, though deficient in the real jewel, was lavish in the display of a well-devised counterfeit, which indeed was so perfect that it deceived even herself.

But it would be wrong to say that Lady Ruth was really unimpressionable: there was a great exception in her manner towards her father. A confirmed valetudinarian, lapped from infancy in the extreme of luxury, unaccustomed to the denial of the slightest wish, his character was selfish and exacting to the last degree. His chair must be placed, his meals served, his amusements arranged exactly as he had always been accustomed to have them. Whoever suffered, he must not be put out ; and, with a tenderness and forgetfulness of self, a devotion that was beautiful to see, and seemed indeed hardly compatible with the measured mediocrity of her general character, Ruth humoured and studied all his whims. The Earl's love for her, perhaps, was

only another phase of selfishness ; but, at all events, it was perfect, and I really believe, for her sake, he would almost have consented to forego some of his habitual luxuries, even for a whole day.

He was proud of Clarence as the future husband of his Ruth, and the heir to the title and estates, and quite contented with the measure of attention he paid her ; the mutual understanding that seemed to exist between the cousins pleased him, probably, better than a more demonstrative attachment would have done, since his own comfort was in no way thereby disturbed ; and, as in his mind, no mortal being could have competed for beauty and accomplishment with Lady Ruth, he only laughed at Clarence's attentions to Edith, and made odious references to the experiences of his own youth.

So, riding parties and walking parties went on, and Clarence was the courteous cavalier to his cousin in the one, and the willing slave of Edith in the other, for horse-exercise the latter never attempted. She was naturally timid, and took pleasure in exaggerating the infirmity, an affectation by no means unusual with many who have an idea that it is interesting in the eyes of the other sex, a delusion of which a few months of matrimony

disabuses them, when the habit has unhappily become too rooted to be overcome.

At first, I was vexed to find the Claytouns of the party, or, at least, Mr. Percy Claytoun; but my apprehensions that his presence would interfere with the pleasure of Amy's visit were soon dispelled, for all recollection of former passages between them seemed to have vanished from their minds; they laughed, and talked, and danced, and rode with the same careless indifference as if they had been mere casual acquaintance. Only once, an uneasy feeling crossed my mind; Amy had been dancing, for with so many young people in the house, it was often an evening amusement; and, after the dance was over, her partner led her to a chair, on the back of which Mr. Percy Claytoun was leaning. He rose as they approached; and, as Amy was about to move the chair backward apparently, Mr. Claytoun stepped forward to assist her, and their hands met. It might have been accidental; but, as she lifted her eyes to his which were bent upon her, there was an expression in both which impressed me with the feeling that their usual indifference was but assumed. It was, however, all momentary, and as Mr. Claytoun withdrew immediately, Amy sat down, and en-

tered easily into a lively conversation with her partner.

But I had little troubles of my own which did not allow much time for observing those of others. Mr. Sholto Forster seemed determined to constitute himself my cavalier. At first, I fear his attentions rather received encouragement than otherwise; for, having met with little flattery to my vanity at home, I was not at all prone to construe mere civilities into more serious intentions, but, on the contrary, was rather grateful to any one who seemed inclined to bestow any notice on me. Besides, I was predisposed in Sholto's favour, by what he had said about Mr. Annesley and Beechley Grange, the day the family drove over to lunch with us, so that I received his first advances very willingly.

A little incident occurred, however, on the third day of our stay, which made me retreat into my usual repulsive manner.

It had been a wet day, and, unable to go out, some of the party were taking exercise in the conservatories and green-houses, of which there was a long range adjoining the house; I was of the number, and being something of a gardener myself, was taking an eager interest in the flowers, and making many inquiries of a man who was at

work among them, as to the names, &c., of those that were new to me. For some time I was alone, but presently Sholto joined me.

"Apparently, you are a lover of flowers, Miss Willoughby," he said.

I replied in the affirmative. "Practically," I added, "as well as theoretically, for the garden at home was under my care."

Of course, he made one of those silly, meaningless speeches, that young men, mostly *very* young ones, think acceptable to beings of a supposed inferior degree of intellect to themselves.

"Yet you are almost the only one I have never seen with a bouquet in the evening," he observed, as I made some laughing reply to his high-flown compliment.

I said, without consideration, "That it was no proof of my indifference to flowers, only that others were indifferent to me, as I could not presume to gather one for myself." I saw almost before the words were uttered, what a foolish move I had made, but it was too late to recall them, so all I could do was to lead the conversation away from the subject, and hope that my speech had made no impression. That evening, when I went to dress for dinner, a bouquet of the most tasteful arrangement lay on my table. I could not but

guess the donor, nor could I refuse to wear what had been so prettily done; and, when we were going into dinner, I noticed that Sholto avoided the lady whom, as the son of the house, it was his duty to lead in, and offered his arm to me.

I saw at once the folly I had committed, though no direct allusion was made to the flowers; but his triumphant manner sufficiently betrayed the construction he had put upon the whole affair. I resolved to be more guarded next day, and apparently he resolved to be more demonstrative; for, in addition to the bouquet on my dressing table, were a few lines written in French, and rolled round them, expressive of the envy the flowers would feel compared with one so much fairer. It was a trite nonsensical idea, but the spirit annoyed me, though it only deserved to be laughed at.

I determined, however, to give no encouragement to such a correspondence; so I tore up the paper that it might not fall into other hands; and, when Miss Forster's maid came to ask if I wanted her assistance, and handed me the bouquet as I was leaving the room, supposing I had forgotten it; I told her to take it away, and tell the gardener I was much obliged to him, but hoped in future he would not pick flowers for me, as I had rather not

wear them. I saw Sholto's look of disappointment as I entered the room flowerless; but, as before, nothing was said.

The next morning, however, as some of us were strolling about an Italian garden, into which one of the rooms opened, and in the centre of which was a large marble basin, full of water-lilies, sprinkled by a fountain, I was struck by the beauty of a *Nymphaea Alba*, which had just opened its pure white petals to the sun; and as I stood admiring the rich, thick, frosted-looking blossom, oblivious of all else, I was roused by the voice of Sholto beside me, saying:—

“So, Miss Mabel Willoughby despised my poor offering of flowers yesterday, and would none of them.”

“Nay,” I replied, turning round quickly, “flowers I could never despise, only—”

“Only the giver. Is it so you would finish the sentence?” he inquired.

“I was going to say,” I went on gravely, “that the label attached to them proved them inappropriate to me, beautiful as they were.”

“I am unfortunate,” he said, “yet it was but the true expression of my thoughts. You doubt it, Miss Willoughby,” he added, seeing I was turning away. I laughed as I replied,

"I am very English, only a country girl brought up in a secluded village, Mr. Foster ; such high-flown compliments are not suited to me, nor," I added, more gravely, "are they to my taste."

"I hope you will believe that the idea of offending was the farthest from my thoughts, Miss Willoughby," he said with earnestness, "indeed I—"

"We are making far too serious a business of such a trifle," I said gaily, interrupting him, "I thank you for the wish to gratify me, and will give you full credit for the best intentions. What a beautiful Nymphaea that is !" I added, endeavouring to change the subject, "surely it is something peculiar."

"Was that what you were contemplating when I came up ?" he asked.

I answered, "Yes ; it was larger, purer, more beautiful than any I had ever seen," and then as I saw him going down the marble steps, "pray don't, Mr. Forster !" I exclaimed. "Indeed I am quite satisfied to admire its beauty as it floats so queenlike there," I went on, as he was making vigorous efforts to bring the flower within the length of his cane. But he paid no attention to my exclamation, except by going down a step

lower, with his feet under water, endeavouring with all his power to draw the flower towards him. And now he had succeeded, and the plant was swinging slowly round towards the rim of the basin ; it was in vain that I urged him to desist.

"It is almost within reach," he said, "and unless you wish to see me totally submerged, you will allow me to balance myself by the aid of your hand while I pluck it."

I could not refuse, and a moment after the flower was placed in my hands.

"You are very kind to have taken so much trouble," I remarked, coldly, "but pleasures obtained with such risk cannot afford me any gratification ; besides, I did not wish to possess the flower, I was content to admire its beauty at a distance."

"Is that really so?" he asked, in a tone of pique, "then, at least, it shall not annoy you," and he made an effort to snatch the flower.

"No," I replied, holding it with both hands, "I did not mean to be ungracious, and admire the flower too much to part with it directly, but I had rather not have had it at so much risk."

"Risk!" he repeated, laughing, "the risk of falling into a wash-hand basin—"

"And of spoiling your boots, Mr. Forster!" exclaimed Edith, laughing, as she and Miss For-

ster joined us at this moment. "Why, Mabel, what have you been leading Mr. Forster into?"

"Into a sea of trouble, I am afraid," his sister remarked, with some emphasis.

"At all events, I hope it is not into a Slough of Despond," added Clarence, who was never far from Edith's side.

"That is so like Mabel," interposed Amy, who was also one of the group, "she thinks of nothing when a flower is in the way."

Every one seemed determined to add a stone to the heap already overwhelming me, I felt angry with myself too, so of course, they all came in for a share of my annoyance.

"You had better go and change those wet boots, Mr. Forster," I said, "or you will subject me to the blame of causing you a cold, as well as of the wish to drown you."

"To hear is to obey," he replied, laughing, "for, indeed, I have at present, something of the air of a distinguished member of the Humane Society."

"Well, it is a beautiful flower, Mabel," Edith observed, "but what will you do with it?"

"Put it in the glass dish that stands on the drawing-room table," I answered. "I had no wish to remove it from its original place."

"I don't think Sholto would have given himself

all that trouble for no better reward," I heard Miss Forster say, as I went towards the open window.

Amy made some laughing reply, and I heard Edith's voice gaily bantering Clarence, till I expected he would be obliged to follow Sholto's example, and take the water; but after chatting and laughing together for a few minutes, they all followed into the house.

CHAPTER XV.

"'Twill fade the radiant dream ! and will she not
Wake with more painful yearning at her heart ?
Will not her home seem yet a lonelier spot,
Her task more sad when these bright shadows part ?
And the green summer after them look dim,
And sorrow's tone be in the wild bird's hymn ?"

HEMANS.

THERE were some additions to the dinner-party that day, and to the astonishment of Amy and myself, we found Mrs. Mainwaring among the guests in the drawing-room.

"I was obliged to come, after all, dears," she said, as we stood together in the window, "they were so very pressing, and then, dear Mrs. Aubrey being here, and Lord Ottersee, and Lady Ruth—sweet creature, Lady Ruth, is she not ?" she went on, following the movements of the fair girl, as she entered, and seated herself by her father. "And look at that little minx Edith,

flirting with Clarence; ah, you naughty girl!" she said, shaking her head at her and laughing, "ah! you know what I mean, Clarence," she went on, carrying on a pantomimic conversation across the room with those she addressed. "But now, my dears, tell me what flirtations are going on. Where's Mr. Claytoun, Amy?"

"Here at your service, Mrs. Mainwaring," said a voice close to her.

"Oh!" putting her hand to her heart, "Mr. Claytoun, how can you frighten one so?"

"I'm afraid you associate me with the adage about the danger of speaking of the absent," he said laughing.

"Oh, you shocking man! Amy, my dear, how can you let him talk so?"

"Mr. Claytoun is not under my charge," Amy answered coldly, colouring, as she walked away and sat down by Miss Forster.

"There I've done wrong!" Mrs. Mainwaring exclaimed.

"Will you make me ambassador extraordinary, to settle terms of peace, Mrs. Mainwaring? or may I tell Miss Willoughby she is to keep me as a hostage till peace is proclaimed?" Mr. Claytoun asked.

"Oh, you naughty man! you know that is

forbidden ground," she replied laughing, as he walked away towards Amy, at the same time throwing back a glance of triumph towards Mrs. Mainwaring.

"Is that really to be?" she asked turning to me; but before I could answer, dinner was announced, and in the general move, I noticed that Mr. Claytoun had taken advantage of his position to offer his arm to Amy.

Next day was the great archery meeting, and a beautiful scene it was, the park was well calculated for it; and Clarence compared it to a scene from Boccacio. Amy looked lovely in the costume which Edith had described, and which was worn by all the competitors; it was very clear, too, that there was at least one other besides myself who was of that opinion. Edith fluttered about hither and thither, more like a humming-bird than ever, with a bow that would have been a mere toy in any other hand. Lady Ruth did not look well in the dress, her tint was too fair for so dark a colour, but her father seemed to think her the only object worth looking at. I could hardly wonder at it, for besides her devotion to him, there was a delicacy and refinement in her appearance, a look of wax-work, which was very attractive, though it may not sound so in description, and

with all Edith's Hebe-like beauty, it looked sensual and almost coarse, beside the pale, stately Ruth.

"I see you are one of the archers," she said, making a sign to me, as I passed near, to come and sit beside her, "and so am I, but only to please papa, for I never could hit more than the outer white in my life."

I replied she might be sure that I should not be a rival to fear, not having more skill than herself, and so we fell gradually into conversation; I saw her eyes glance occasionally towards Clarence, who was the shadow of Edith, but there was no jealousy in the glance, only a look of fond pride and pleasure.

"Clarence has quite an artist's eye for beauty," she remarked after a time, "what a fairy thing that ward of Mr. Annesley's is, it seems a pity she should—"

"Ruth, my love!" said her father in his querulous tone, "I am sure the grass is damp under my feet, I wish you would fetch one of those cushions and put under them."

In a moment, Ruth was busily attending to the whims of the invalid, and I sat dreamily looking at Edith, and thinking of Ruth's words, and waiting till she was at liberty to finish the sen-

tence. All at once, another figure joined the little fairy and Clarence, and almost before my eyes recognised him, the bounding of my heart told me it was Mr. Annesley. I leaned back against the tree, at the foot of which I was sitting, and covered my eyes with my hand, as if I thought the sense had deceived me; but it was no trick of glamour, and when I looked up again, there he was, talking animatedly and smiling down in his gentle way upon the sunny face upturned to him, while yet a keen, eager glance was, from time to time, sent round the company as if in search of some one else.

I saw him touch various parts of her dress as if admiring it, and she smiled still brighter; then he took the fairy bow from her hand, and seemed to laugh heartily as he shewed her what a plaything it was in his grasp; presently I saw him take something from his waistcoat pocket and shew her, at the distance I could not guess what, but she clapped her hands and tried to take it, and he smiled and shook his head, and replaced it in his pocket again, and then he moved on, and she turned to Clarence. He stood for a moment looking all around him, and then a group of people came between us, and he was lost to me.

Ruth turned round to speak, "I fear I am a

bad companion," she observed, "but papa wanted me, and I saw you had plenty to amuse your eyes."

"Ruth, my love, you are sure you don't feel cold," said the Earl. Ruth turned again to answer him, and, at that moment, I heard a step on the turf, and in an instant after, the well-known voice of Mr. Annesley, as, dropping himself down beside me, he said:—

"So you are enjoying this sweet sylvan scene, Mabel, are you?"

"Oh, yes, thoroughly," I replied, with animation.

"And yet I thought you looked grave, almost sad, when I first caught a glimpse of you," he said.

"I was alone then, but now—" and then I stopped; "I mean," I went on hesitatingly, "it is very enjoyable when I have Lady Ruth to talk to."

His face had lighted up with a sweet pleased smile as I spoke, and then the brightness faded as I stammered out the concluding words; but he continued without appearing to notice my confusion.

"Yes, it is a sweet scene. It must have been a bitter day when this was taken from us."

"And yet I prefer the Grange," I answered quickly.

"To me, the Grange is full of sweet associations," he said, "but in point of beauty there is no comparison."

"And had you been in the place of the ancestor who suffered it to be taken from him rather than stain his own loyalty, would you have compared it then with the Grange, and hesitated?" I asked.

"Would you have had me do so, Mabel?" he demanded in return, looking into my eyes.

"I would rather see you Mr. Annesley of the Grange, as you are now, or even without an acre of land, than Mr. Annesley of Brackenhurst, Beechley, and half the county besides, with the brand of disloyalty on your name," I replied, speaking very low.

Again that pleased smile flitted across his face as he said, "Thank you, Mabel, I knew we thought alike;" then after a pause, as the look of pleasure faded again, "but there are some who would feel differently, I know—Mrs. Mainwaring for example," and he laughed, though I don't believe she was in his mind when he spoke. There was silence for a minute, and then I said, timidly, in spite of myself,

"Mr. Annesley."

"What is it, Mabel?" he enquired, with surprise probably at my hesitation, as he turned from the

scene he had been dreamily gazing upon, and looked into my face again. I was taking the pin that had been so long upon my conscience out of my dress, and as I held it for a moment, I felt my cheeks burn like fire.

"Ah, my pin!" he exclaimed, taking it from me as I held it towards him, "you are an honest little girl, Mabel!"

I told him that I had been quite distressed at having kept it so long, that I had intended returning it the same night, but had not seen him since, and did not like to give it to either Miss Annesley, or Edith, though I feared he might want it.

"You did quite right to keep it for me, Mabel," he said, "I had not forgotten where it was, and did not want it at all—yes, I did though," he corrected himself; "and so you have worn it for me like a good little girl."

I replied that I had always kept it about me, in the hope of having an opportunity of returning it.

"It is quite like meeting with an old friend," he went on, smiling. "Welcome

" 'My little vagrant form of light.

My gay, my beautiful—*bijou*!"

I wonder what honest Wordsworth would say to the liberty I have taken with his line?"

He seemed wonderfully elated by the recovery of the trinket. I thought its absence must have been a serious loss to him. I don't think I sympathized at all with him, I felt sorry to part with the companion of the last ten days, and sat silently looking on. At last he rose from the turf on which he had been reclining.

"I am sadly remiss," he said, "I must go and make my reverences to the noble Earl and his fair daughter," and as he entered into conversation with them, I was left to the pursuit of my own thoughts.

But our little group was soon broken up. The shooting had commenced, and, by and bye, Lady Ruth and myself were called to the targets to take our turn. She was summoned some time before I was, and, during her absence, Mr. Annesley took her place.

"You seem to like Lady Ruth, Mabel," he remarked.

I replied, that I admired her for the devoted love she bore to her father, and could not but think that she must have more depth in her character than people gave her credit for, who only judged from the composure of her manner.

"I think you estimate her justly, Mabel," he returned; "and I wish that wild young cousin of

hers would form as true an opinion. I don't think he pays her the attention he ought."

I observed that I thought she was not dissatisfied, it seemed to be such a regular case of treaty of marriage, that all romance was done away, and the cousins were satisfied with the knowledge that one day they were to be united.

"It is a foolish arrangement," he muttered almost in soliloquy, "and not fair to tie people down in that way without consulting their feelings; but," he continued louder, "I think Clarence is avoiding his cousin too decidedly, and making Edith too remarkable, it is worse than folly in both of them, and I am glad I came here to-day instead of going straight home as I first intended. I must use my authority as guardian anyhow in that quarter. You may thank your good angel that you are not an heiress, Mabel, you have at least the liberty of choosing your own happiness," he added, as he rose and went in the direction of Edith.

Had I the liberty? and had I found happiness? It did not look much like it certainly, in the sense at least that Mr. Annesley intended.

By and bye my turn came for the targets; I felt very indifferent about the matter, being quite

sure I was far too unskilful to win the prize, which indeed I had no wish to do. What then was my astonishment to find when the contest was ended, that I was declared the winner, two of my arrows having entered the bull's eye! It was the very indifference and consequent absence of nervousness which steadied my eye and hand, and made me victor.

It really distressed more than pleased me, for the prize was a beautiful bracelet of opals and diamonds, quite inconsistent with my station, and, besides, I could see how annoyed those were who in point of real skill had much more right to it. I would willingly have had it shot for a second time, or competed for by those who had been nearest, but it was in vain; Mr. Sholto Forster who had the distribution of the prizes, declared it fairly won, and that I was too far ahead of any to leave a moment's doubt, so I was obliged to accept it, and from his hand, which doubled my annoyance. I could not help saying as he clasped the gems upon my arm, that I felt quite ashamed of appropriating a thing so unsuited to me.

"Unsuited!" he exclaimed, in a tone too low to be heard by any other amidst the hubbub of surrounding voices, "Yes, earth's richest trea-

sures do not contain a jewel that is suited to the worth of her who now wears this trinket."

If ever I had the power of expressing scorn by look, it must have been at that moment, when I heard such hyperbolical language addressed to me. How much dearer had been the "You are an honest little girl, Mabel," of an hour ago! But feeling some answer necessary, I observed, with a laugh, "that I thought he seemed to understand the use of the bow figuratively, at all events, better than I did."

"I would that I could speed my shaft with the same unerring certainty to the mark I aim at," he said, looking very earnest, "I would at once try my skill."

It was a great relief to hear Mrs. Mainwaring's voice exclaiming, "What are you two disputing about?" as the crowd divided before her ample flounces and she came up to us; "you ought to think yourself a most fortunate girl, Mabel, to have won a prize that so many are trying for," she went on with a laugh, and a look at Mr. Forster full of meaning.

"It is a prize I am by no means ambitious of," I replied, affecting not to understand the double meaning of her words, "and am only sorry to have deprived others of it."

"Hope ever, despair never," said Mrs. Mainwaring, nodding and smiling at Sholto, "Faint heart, you know."

"I don't think faint-heartedness a Forster failing," was the reply.

"You are right there, Mr. Sholto," she returned laughing, as she passed on, scattering flatteries or sarcasms according to the characters of those she addressed.

When the sport was over, and Amy and I were in our room, I ventured to say how sorry I was that Mr. Claytoun was here, and would always pay her so much attention since Mrs. Mainwaring had joined the party. I thought it would vex my father.

"You are a child, Mabel," was the answer I got, "and a very silly, and what is more, a very meddlesome one. What business have you to think for either Mr. Claytoun or myself? I suppose soon I shall have to ask your permission to speak to any one."

"I did not mean to be meddlesome, Amy," I replied, "I only said what I think, that Mr. Claytoun has no business to put himself in your way, or to pay you attentions, which are remarked by others, after what has passed between him and papa."

"That's your opinion," Amy answered, laughing, "and pray have you no word of advice to give Clarence or Edith on the same subject, Miss Prudentia?"

I said I had not the same interest in them, and whatever I might think, had no right to speak.

"Only to preach to your elder sister," she observed, "this comes of Mr. Paragon Annesley's petting and teaching; by and bye we shall have you telling papa he does not know how to manage his parish."

"Well then I can only say, I'm sorry I spoke," I answered, trying to turn it off into a laugh.

"Very well then, speak no more about what you don't understand, or perhaps it may be my turn to call you to account for coquetting in that childish way with Sholto Forster, who is only laughing at you; and making him get into the water like a great Newfoundland dog to pick those choice lilies that Mrs. Forster is so particular about."

"Oh, Amy!" I exclaimed, "you know that was not my fault, it only vexed me."

"I may believe as much of that as I like," she said with a scornful laugh, "but if you tell

tales of me, mind I can retaliate, and then we shall hear what the Paragon will say to his pattern pupil."

"Why, Amy, I did not even appropriate the flower, and refused his bouquets, as you know," I exclaimed, vexed and angry.

"Oh yes!" she went on, seeing her advantage, "of course we did, we knew better than to receive them; it did not suit us to act openly; if Paragon was not there himself, his sister was, and she had eyes and the power of speech."

I was silent; to defend myself, I saw, was worse than useless, and I might truly have said then I was sorry I had spoken; for I knew Amy well enough to fear, that the very determination to shew her independance would drive her to act more foolishly; so I went on dressing without speaking. Presently there was a tap at the door, and Edith came in ready to go down stairs; she looked from one to the other for a minute, and then asked, "What's the matter, Mabel? have I come inopportunately?"

"Oh!" Amy replied, laughing, "Sir Isaac is a little discomposed because I have been giving her some wholesome advice, so she has got a fit of the sullens; but come, Mabel," she went on, putting her arm round my neck, "I did

not think you would have given way to temper here, so forgive me, there's a good girl, and let us kiss and be friends."

"With all my heart, Amy," I answered, returning her kiss, "but, indeed, you must know that I am not sullen."

"No, no, dear," she replied coaxingly, "we will say no more about it; but, Humming-bird, *you* don't look quite yourself just now; is it the disappointment of losing the prize?"

"Oh no," she said, laughing, "everyone knows that was intended for Mabel; I believe if things were inquired into, we should find it a case of magnetism, her arrows going so plump into the gold. No, that does not vex me, but I, too, have had a lecture, and like it no better than Mabel does."

Amy raised her eyebrows, "Guardians, and younger sisters, and presuming cavaliers, were all great bores," she said, and, if she were in Edith's place, she would not stand being lectured by the Paragon, "who, between you and I, Edith," she went on, pretending to whisper, "I don't think is a bit better than the rest of his sex, he only wants to keep you all to himself, and patch his tattered Grange, with the goodly acres of Calvers. Mrs. Mainwaring put me up to that

manœuvre, so never mind him, Edith, and don't be imposed upon."

The dinner bell sounded, and we had to go down without saying more, but I had gotten one or two subjects for meditation which did not improve my appetite, especially that last hint of Amy's; for, though I knew Mrs. Mainwaring to be essentially a newsmonger, and, consequently, obliged to keep false as well as real goods in her warehouse to suit all demands, there was enough of plausibility in what I had just heard to set me thinking.

I was too proud to apply to Mrs. Mainwaring for confirmation or refutation of the slander, and too delicate to ask Miss Annesley for information which in no way really concerned me. I had heard words murmured which gave some colour to the idea; and yet when I looked at that countenance, open and noble as it was, and thought over the various traits of character which had from time to time come forth accidentally, the loyalty which seemed a part of his nature, and the abhorrence of worldly or low motives which every act of his life had shewn, I could not think this was more than one of those random shots, which Mrs. Mainwaring occasionally fired off, to increase her own importance in the opinion of the

world. And yet—and so it went on, and the dinner went on too, and the buzz of conversation, and I took my part in it, mechanically, certainly ; for if any one had questioned me on the subjects spoken of, or the opinions I had given, I think I should have answered very wide of the mark.

But the week came to an end ; the next day we were to go home, and most of the other guests were to leave too ; and oh ! how I longed to be at home once more ! how little real enjoyment I had had ! and even that little, how chequered with shadow ! and yet withal it gave me a pang when I thought of the one bright sunbeam which had cheered me, and which would now fall upon another. It pained me too to part from Lady Ruth, there seemed to be one of those incomprehensible sympathies between us which drew us mutually to each other ; I always liked her society, and fancied she threw off much of her accustomed coldness when we were together. The Earl thought the same probably, for when he shook me by the hand as we were about to step into the Forsters carriage, which was to take us home, he turned to his daughter and said, “ Ruth, my darling, you must ask your friend to come to Alverstoke, it will give me very great pleasure to see her there.”

I thanked his lordship for his kindness, and as Ruth put her arm within mine and went with me to the door, she echoed the wish very cordially.

"I am so glad papa said that," she said, "I have been wishing it so much, we have so few friends at Alverstoke. I fancy the great people of the county look shyly on me, though I don't know why; but their reserve has made me reserved, and papa never encourages my associating much with the families round us, so I suppose they think I am proud."

Poor Ruth! it was plain her mother's sad story had been concealed from her; one of the few instances where such a secret had been kept from reaching the person, whom it was desirable should remain in ignorance. Doubtless it was on this account, that the Earl had made such a point of the marriage between the cousins; it was well for all, that Mrs. Mainwaring was not in the neighbourhood of Alverstoke.

"Good bye, dear Mabel," she said, as we shook hands at the door, "we shall not be at home again till late in the autumn, but then I hope your papa will let you come and stay with us."

CHAPTER XVI.

" Tacete, tacete, o suoni trionfanti !
Risvegliate in vano 'l cor che non può liberarsi."

" Alas ! 'twas but a chilling breath
Woke just enough of life in death
To make hope die anew."

COLERIDGE.

HOME ! that sweet English word ! how many associations it conjures up ! The years of childhood with all their treasured memories ; the tender watchful care of beloved parents, the sweet endearing intercourse of brothers and sisters ; the many great joys standing out in glowing brightness as we look backward, like the snowy Alps of a mountain range catching the rosy beams of the setting sun ; the few sorrows sunk and lost in the mellow shades of Time, as the fissures and deep ravines of the mountains are concealed by distance.

Who could not remember to the latest hour of man's longest span of life, every object, every corner of that early home? The room in which our happy, mirthful winter evenings were passed amid the circle of our dear ones: the garden, gayer than any garden we have ever seen since: nay, than those even of Armida herself—where in the sweet summer evenings—are the evenings ever as warm and genial now?—we played our childish games, or wandered in more advanced, but still early years with our cherished companions. Oh, first home! oh, childhood! oh, youth! what after pleasures can ever equal those sweet associations? before care and anxiety and memory have come to take the place where hope then dwelt alone!

Yes! the poor cottager who has never known aught even in childhood beyond a struggle for bare life, loves the associations of his childhood's home; amid comforts and even comparative wealth, yearns for the cabin where he first drew breath; with the first moment of liberty flies back to renew its memories; and, except for the sake of those for whom he must provide, would rather endure poverty and even want in the place where he was born, to independence if forced to leave it.

Yes, there is a magic in the word 'home' which kindles every heart, and as migratory birds return

year after year to the same trees among which they were hatched, there to build their own nests, so do our hearts fly back when sorrow and trial overtake us, to that first home where dwell all our earliest and fondest associations.

But I forget that I am now looking at my beloved home from a more distant point of view, and the word has aroused feelings and memories that had not been called into existence at the time of which I am writing. It was only towards home as a refuge from the many little vexations which had troubled my stay at Brackenhurst; as a haven of rest after a period of excitement, that I then yearned. Truly there was great delight in returning to the calm round of duties and pleasures which made up our life at the Rectory; and, while resuming old habits and former occupations, I felt not one regret for all the grandeur and gaiety I had left behind.

The Annesleys and Edith remained a few days longer, and this enabled me to take advantage of the solitude of the Grange and return to some of my interrupted studies. The old place, however, was not long without its inhabitants, that is Miss Annesley and Edith, for Mr. Annesley returned to town from Brackenhurst.

Edith had been slightly ailing the day before

they left Brackenhurst, but it was attributed to over-excitement, and they hoped the quiet of the Grange would quickly restore her. A lassitude, however, continued to hang about her: she was no more the merry, ever-restless humming-bird of a week ago, and, as day after day passed and no improvement was visible, Miss Annesley became apprehensive, and medical advice was summoned from Winterford.

For the sake of sparing Miss Annesley, who was not equal to much fatigue, I spent the greater part of every day at the Grange, chiefly in the bower-room, where Edith would lie listlessly on the sofa, listening while I read or sang to her, or else dozing, or seeming to doze. A low fever was upon her, and at last Miss Annesley thought it better to write to her brother. In a few hours after the receipt of the letter, he was at the Grange accompanied by an eminent physician. The arrival of her guardian seemed to revive the invalid for a time; she regained her spirits in some degree, and her merry laugh was now and then heard once more, but this did not last long, and she soon sank back again into her former apathetic state. Mr. Annesley's attention to her was unremitting: no mother could have been more tender or thoughtful, no lover more

anxious. He imagined a thousand devices for her amusement and comfort, he watched and anticipated her slightest wish, and devoted all his skill and time to lighten the tedium of her sick-chamber. I was her almost constant companion, and at last by her wish took up my residence entirely at the Grange, that I might sleep in her room.

Thus I saw but little of Amy, who only came occasionally to visit us. Sometimes, I would take an early walk before Edith awoke from the sleep which often fell upon her in the morning, and usually lasted for some hours; in this manner I was still able to superintend my subordinate in the garden, Jem Maddocks, and to attend to some of the pleasant home duties which I had either made for myself or had fallen naturally to my share, and to have a little chat with Amy and my father. Occasionally, I breakfasted with them, and then returned to prepare that meal for my invalid charge, and help to place her on the couch in her morning-room. When the weather, or more than usual sleeplessness on the part of Edith, prevented my taking my accustomed walk for a few days, I always found my place in the garden had been more than supplied, and that Fenton had been my substitute.

I was not often in the society of Mr. Annesley ; I used generally to take advantage of his visits to steal down into the library, which, now that he was so much at home, and I no longer the child-pupil, had become almost a forbidden pleasure to me. Sometimes, however, I remained with Edith, when, after he had chatted with and amused her in a thousand ways, as one would talk to and play with a child, he would gradually draw me into the conversation, and fall into a deeper tone, bring out the rich treasures of his own mind and fill mine with those gems, and then as it were, hold up a mirror before me, so as to make it appear that the sparkling and costly things that I found reflected there were emanations from myself. Oh, how precious were those hours to me, and yet how full of poison ! and Edith would lie still and listen as the conversation became gradually confined to ourselves ; and, after a time, when her presence seemed to be almost or quite forgotten, she would break out into one of her old merry laughs, and clap her fairy hands, declaring she could not think how we could sit and talk so like two old philosophers ; and then her guardian would turn and ask her laughingly if she supposed philosophers were always necessarily old, and if she considered poetry a branch of philosophy ; and

we used to fall into the former light jesting tone, all three of us; then he would look at his watch, and start up saying he had come for an hour to play with her, and she had beguiled him into remaining three hours; and she used to call him her dear good Gardie, and make him promise to come again the next day, or that evening, if he could; and he would say the visit to her room was the reward that he always claimed for himself, when the duties of the day were done, and then, with a bright tender smile, he would say, "Good bye, Edith, and don't be too hard upon your kind, watchful nurse," and then the door closed upon him, and then—

"I woke as from a blissful dream,
And hardly dared to think such things had been!"

But all this kind care and watchfulness were recompensed at last; after a few weeks, Edith began to mend rapidly, and I fear I almost regretted that the necessity for my remaining longer an inmate of the Grange would soon cease, and those delicious conversations be no longer mine. When she was thought well enough to be no longer a prisoner in her apartments, Mr. Annesley left home again. He spent the evening before his departure with his sister and myself in Edith's

bower-room, devoting himself to her entirely, not, I mean, to the exclusion of Miss Annesley and me, but the conversation was general and playful, and such as he knew to be adapted to her taste peculiarly. I was beginning to feel disappointed in a visit to which I had been looking forward all day, as sure to leave thoughts and feelings which my mind could feed upon till we met again, and to fancy—well I know not what—but something that made me shiver and feel sad. Perhaps I looked so; I fear the shadow of what was passing in my mind might be visible in my countenance and in my attitude, as I sate leaning on the table, my head resting on my hand, listlessly playing with some bits of thread and litter that lay before me. I am afraid he noticed it, and read my thoughts, for he had a strange power of reading unexpressed feelings and thoughts, and often when I saw how readily he interpreted the slightest shade of expression in Edith's face, which would have escaped my own notice, I used to tremble at the recollection how often the secret thoughts of my own heart must be legible to his eye.

At all events, without appearing to notice the dejection that I was almost unconsciously indulging, he turned suddenly from the playful talk

he was engaged in with Edith, declaring that she was laughing too much, and would be too excited to sleep. "A little music would soothe your nerves, Edith, would it not? I don't know how long it is since I have heard the sound of the piano, and I dare say Mabel would try its power of mesmerism over this flighty little spirit: would you kindly do so, dear Mabel?" he said, as, he opened the instrument.

It was the first time he had added that little adjective to my name since I was a wee, wee child, and oh, how my heart bounded to hear it! I would have done anything within the possibility of my limited capacity to accomplish, for the gratification solely of hearing him call me "dear Mabel," though it was probably only a coaxing way of asking me to make an exertion for him. Had he any idea of the extent of the power he had used? I did not stop to ask myself the question, then; I dare not try to answer it contrary to his nature to be wantonly cruel—and now. It was yet—well, after all, he was but man!

I rose at once; he did not even glance at my face, but busied himself in arranging the piano for me.

"What shall I sing?" I asked more for the

sake of saying something than from any expectation of being answered.

"We must look out some of Edith's favourites," he said, laying a heap of music before me, and selecting one or two light things which he knew she loved. Again that "we;" what power of association, what expression lies in the little word which is often spoken so thoughtlessly! Was he thoughtless—or triumphant? who knows?

I took the seat he had prepared, and sang song after song to please Edith. I felt annoyed at the selection he had made. I would rather have sung or been asked to sing, to please him; my voice was a little husky, and my manner listless; after one or two pieces, he left the seat he occupied by the table near the piano, and, crossing to the couch, leaned over the back of it, speaking in a low voice to Edith and stroking her hair. It was nearly her time for going to bed; I knew he would not stay much longer; I determined to make one effort to exert the power I was conscious of being able to exercise over him; I threw aside the light operatic pieces before me, and, summoned genius to my aid—it came at my call; words—deep, glowing, earnest words, wedded themselves to appropriate music. I saw him change; he rose from his leaning posture, and

stood, his face turned from me, his arms folded ; presently, he left the couch and walked to the window behind it. My soul was now fairly roused ; words and tones swelled into a strain of passionate triumph, flowing on for a time like the waves of Ocean, when the tempest is rousing all its fearful strength ; and then they fell and gradually died away in faint, trembling murmurs of grief and despair, like the low moaning of the groundswell, when the storm has subsided, or the sobs of a weeping child, when its tears are exhausted, and it sighs itself to sleep on its mother's breast.

My song was ended ; the momentary inspiration passed away ; my hands sank powerless upon my lap, and my agitated frame shook as the energy ceased, and the consequent reaction made itself felt.

There was a moment of silence, and then Edith began in her childish way to talk to Miss Annesley. Her guardian turned from the window where he had been standing, and coming to me, said in a low tone, as he leaned over the piano, "Thank you, Mabel ; you are a dangerous interpreter of the hearts of others ; it is not the first time I have had cause to fear your power ; but now, if not too much, I would ask for some melody to soothe the troubled waters, whose

waves the spirit of the storm has so excited ; a light breaking over the horizon, be it never so distant and indistinct."

Without speaking, I prepared to comply with his request ; I preluded slowly and thoughtfully for a few seconds, and then, adopting the idea that he had suggested, I imagined the winds retreating to their lair, and the waves subsiding gradually ; the tempest-tost vessel, partially disabled as it was, recovering its buoyancy, and once more obeying the helm. Then, I took up the melody from Oberon, and peopled the sea with mermaids ; some pouring oil on the troubled waters, others repairing the shattered sails, filling them with soft breezes, and wafting the vessel gently on its course, as they floated round it, and cheered the hearts of the sailors with their sweet harmonies. I pictured the gradual clearing of the horizon as the dark clouds rolled away, and shewed a distant shore where bright sunbeams lighted up the landscape, and shone upon the homes of the mariners. I described the joy of the sailors, as they recognised their port, and then, when happiness seemed within their grasp, suddenly the tone changed ; while the sun shone, and the waves danced, and all was gladness, an unnoticed leak had been filling the fair ship with water ; the sea closed over

it and the mermaid's song sank into a solemn dirge.

I looked up as I ended, and met his eyes.

"Why that mournful close, Mabel?" he asked. "Why would you cut them off from the bliss which was at their lips?"

"It was involuntary," I replied with a smile, "I would willingly have brought the vessel safely into port, but it could not be. Perhaps it was a feeling of the vanity of looking for happiness on earth, or of reckoning with certainty on bliss, from which apparently only a moment of time seems to separate us."

"You are a Sybil," he said, "I was sure of it, so I wanted you to prophecy to me smooth things, and now you have altogether—baffled me."

"I have done my best," I said, "I have carried you through the storm, I have cradled you in a fair dwelling, I have filled your sails with prosperous breezes, and surrounded you with all that could minister to your enjoyment and delight, I have shewn you a brighter home, and if that fair sun-lighted shore with all its peaceful resting-places, can only be reached through death, have you not, meanwhile, had a sufficient share of earthly happiness?" My mood

was disturbed, and I dare say I spoke with some bitterness, for he replied carelessly as he turned away.

"'Tis a mere moral, and from you, Mabel, I hoped and expected something more ; but Edith is sitting up too late."

"What could you hope or wish for from me that I would not give you ?" I exclaimed, my overwrought spirit at once breaking down as I covered my face with my hands, and gave way to silent but passionate tears. I don't know whether he heard the words ; they were sighed rather than spoken, but he saw the action, and, turning quickly, he put his arm gently round me, and led, almost carried me to a fauteuil, while he whispered low, "Forgive me, Mabel ; the wish to ignore the power you hold over my spirit, and the desire to propitiate the sybil, have made me selfish."

Then, as Miss Annesley came up to me anxiously, and I looked up at her with an attempt to smile, he went on aloud,

"I have been selfishly tasking Mabel's powers too much, Margaret, forgetting that improvisation is not so easy as simple song. You must see that she goes quickly to rest, and that the humming-bird is not exacting. Good bye, dear Mabel, I

asked you to soothe my own troubled spirit, but meant not to agitate yours."

We shook hands as I murmured a good bye, and then he went to bid Edith farewell: I heard him caution her to be very careful of her kind nurse for *his* sake, then once again the door closed upon him, and the room seemed to become dark.

But though his last words were to Edith, his last thought was of me, and yet again I had a proof that he was mindful of me, for soon afterwards Miss Annesley's maid brought up a glass of white wine negus with a few biscuits, and a request from Mr. Annesley that Miss Willoughby would take that and go to rest at once, as she could do all that was necessary for Miss Marsh, he bade her say.

Oh, what nectar and ambrosia was that light repast! I drained the glass as if it were of the contents alone that I thought, and not of the kind hand who had mixed them, and sent me this expression of his care for me. Edith laughed to see my enjoyment of the delicious draught, and said she did not know I had such a weakness for tippling, and Miss Annesley patted my head, and said it would please her brother to hear how much I had enjoyed it. And the biscuits, I ate all but

one, the crumbs even, for had he not picked out himself those which he knew I preferred ? Only the half of one of the biscuits I concealed : it was a foolish thought, but it was one of those which have two hearts united by a motto, stamped upon them, it was the only one of the sort.

I divided it, one half I put away and preserved carefully, the other I sent down, bidding the servant shew the plate to Mr. Annesley, that he might see how religiously I had obeyed his injunctions. My own half, I have yet ; here it is in its delicate wrapper of paper : never since, by night or day has that little biscuit left me ; it has lain in my purse, and when I slept been deposited beneath my pillow. I have often wondered whether the corresponding half has been equally cared for ; foolish thought ! why should it ? It was doubtless thrown away ; perhaps the servant never attended to my request, perhaps she eat it herself as she went down stairs, or perhaps he was already gone out, and the severed heart was not thought of.

I never had the courage to ask the woman, and she probably thought there was nothing to tell.

When I awoke next morning, Mr. Annesley had already left the Grange, and it was more than

a month ere we saw him again ; the bright summer was then drawing to a close, and September just setting in.

But Edith was getting well fast, and there was no anxiety about her to make him hasten his return. All her old gaiety was coming back, and, in a week after Mr. Annesley left, I was allowed to go home, with a promise that I would make daily visits to the Grange as long as Edith remained there.

Philip had complained terribly of my absence ; I had been away during almost the whole of his vacation, "and but for Mrs. Mainwaring," he said, "he might as well have been at school, for Amy was grown very stupid, she used to go out walking without him ; and, if he managed to catch her before she went, she had always some errand for him to do. I might as well have been her footman at once," he grumbled, "for I was made to run about with a basket of scraps to this old woman, and a heap of flannel to that, and sometimes she despatched me to Arden House, and that was not so bad, for Mrs. Mainwaring, like a jolly good soul, as she is, had always employment for me that I liked, and was always pleasant ; she would ask me to drive her somewhere, and treat me assomething better than the schoolboy drudge Amy would

make me. Then Amy used to have her own story for my father ; and, when he asked at dinner, what we had been doing, she had always some plausible tale ready cut and dried ; sometimes, it was that she had gone to Dame Merewether's, bidding me meet her there, and had waited for me till she was tired. Sometimes, she pretended I had gone right away to Arden House, and forgot to add that it was on her errand. She knew Mr. Annesley had given me the use of his horses, and that was made the most of, though she must have known that whether I was alone, or he with me, I should never let my rides interfere with her hours of walking ; but it was sometimes this, sometimes that, and making faces at me all the time to keep me silent. I could not tell what she was at, but I knew it was as much as my life was worth to disobey her Ladyship : shouldn't I have caught it when we were alone ?" he said, making a comical grimace, "and now just as you are come home, Mabel, the vacation is over."

I was sorry for poor Philip, and still more so for Amy, for I could not help thinking Mr. Claytoun was in some way connected with all these manœuvres which Philip detailed so unsuspectingly, and, moreover, that Mrs. Mainwaring had a hand in the matter.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ 'Tis gone, like dreams that we forget,
There was a smile or two—yet—yet—
I can remember them, I see
The smiles worth all the world to me !”

WORDSWORTH.

THE thoughts that Philip's disclosures opened, made me feel very unhappy, and the more so that I did not see clearly whether I ought to speak of them, or to whom.

My father ? but then he was so fond and proud of Amy, he would never believe she could do wrong, and it would all be set down to jealousy in me ; besides, if he did believe me, I dreaded his known sternness, and what Amy would have to suffer in consequence ; and, after all, it was mere conjecture. It might only be that she did not want to be troubled with a schoolboy in her walks : I

knew from experience that it often was a great bore, when one had a book or was not in the mood to enter into school-interests, or to endure practical jokes ; and Philip was just now in the most disagreeable phase of schoolboyhood, hovering between the boy and the man ; but he had never hinted at her having any other companion, and had I any right to accuse her without some proof ?

Many a time have I sat on the rocks or on the sea-shore cogitating over this matter ; sometimes, I thought of Mrs. Mainwaring, but I knew well that lady's love of intrigue, and that she would be more than a match for me if there really were anything to conceal. Miss Annesley ! her invalid habits had made her too indolent to enable me to expect any vigour of judgment from her. If her brother had been at home, I might, perhaps, have referred my difficulty to him, though I am not sure of this ; it was of my sister, not myself, that I had to speak, and I had no right to consult him upon her affairs, though I could have made him—at least, at one time, I should have felt no difficulty in asking his advice on my own account.

So it ended in my doing nothing, and, as Amy expressed herself glad to have me back again, and did not seem to have anything to conceal, I hoped

the mountain I had been raising was in reality nothing but a molehill.

Amy appeared far too light-hearted to be acting a double part. She was always laughing at what she called my plurality of admirers, though she said she hardly knew whether his most Serene Highness Mr. Annesley could be termed an admirer, nor did she well know whether it was Edith or myself on whom his sublime attentions were bestowed. But there was no doubt about the great water-dog, as she called Sholto Forster; he affected no sublimity, she might say almost literally that he was over head and ears in love, at all events he was ankle deep in it, or in water, which under the circumstances was the same thing; and, though much water would quench fire, it was well known that a small quantity would only increase the flame; and so she went on playing upon Sholto Forster and the unfortunate water-lily scene, till I was thankful that the hero of it was one to whom I felt so utterly indifferent.

She said he had called several times during the last month at the Rectory, and had taken such a wonderful interest in the church and the village, that he was continually riding in that direction. She had heard, that one night a sus-

picious-looking character had been seen loitering about the shrubberies and grounds near the House at Beechley by one of the keepers, who had given chase, but the man was too nimble for him; and, as no depredations had been committed on the preserves, nor any poaching implements discovered, nothing had been said about it. She had herself seen him once accoutred as a fisherman by the river-side not far from the Rectory, at a spot where it was notorious that no fish could be caught, and, as his line was lying on the water, utterly innocent of bait, while the sun behind him, threw the shadow of his figure far out over the stream, she hardly thought that it could be any of the finny tribe he was angling for.

Mrs. Mainwaring was equally unmerciful, and, after having been baited by both of them one day, till I was quite wearied, I suddenly asked if they were quite sure they had never mistaken any other wandering swain for Mr. Sholto Forster?

The unexpected thrust took effect, and for a little time I was left in peace. But Mrs. Mainwaring undertook to constitute herself Mr. Forster's advocate.

"It would be quite a feather in your cap to win such a prize, my dear Mabel," she said.

I replied that I thought she had not been any friend to the Forster family, so it surprised me to hear her take up his cause.

"Well, dear, you know Mr. Forster is very proud of his wealth," she remarked, "and perhaps deservedly so, for it proves some cleverness in him; but then again his mother who was highly connected I've been told, was a very superior woman, and his children are thoroughly educated; young Sholto, especially, is thought, even by Mr. Annesley, very clever; he is decidedly handsome, and moreover he is heir to Brackenhurst."

I smiled, and then I sighed as she talked thus.

"Clever? in so far as he can speak French, and knows some schoolboy Latin. Handsome? that mere combination of flesh and blood which forms a fresh complexion and good features; a soulless face set in a frame of black hair. Heir of Brackenhurst? Mrs. Mainwaring, you never made a worse hit than when you added that to his list of advantages." I compared him with my own ideal; a mind imbued with all literary treasures, high and noble thoughts, and feelings; a countenance expressive of everything that was lofty and refined, every feature indicating soul; the *disinherited* of Brackenhurst, through the

loyalty of his ancestors ; ennobled and enriched even by the want of all that they had sacrificed for good faith.

I sighed again.

"Mabel is considering the matter, Mrs. Mainwaring," Amy said with a laugh, "Mr. Forster will not always be fishing in troubled waters, I predict."

"Well, my dears, I will send for a dress from Paris purposely for the occasion," replied Mrs. Mainwaring, "so I hope you will invite me to the wedding."

"There are two important preliminaries necessary," I answered laughing, "and I promise you the invitation."

"And these are?"

"The offer and its acceptance," I said with a laugh.

"Then I may write to Paris to-morrow," she observed, "for that the offer will be made I could stake my existence, and for the rest—"

"We will wait till it is made," I laughingly replied.

In the meantime, Edith was making rapid progress towards health, and my daily visits to the Grange were now often very unequally divided between the library and the bower-room. One

evening, I found her less lively than usual, she had been presuming too much on the strength regained, and had worn herself out with excitement; so I found her stretched upon the couch up-stairs and eagerly listening for me, because she knew I would sit down on that cushion on the floor and finish the book, which she was dying to hear the end of, but too lazy to read herself.

I drew the cushion close to her couch and took the book, but the capricious little humming-bird soon changed her mind. "You look worn and weary yourself, Mabel," she said, "and I am afraid I have been very selfish, and thought little of all the fatigue you underwent during my illness; Gardie was always talking about you, and recording your praises, and telling me how selfish I was, and now I begin to think he was right as usual."

I laughed at the idea of my having been overfatigued, and said it was only the oppressive closeness of the atmosphere that made me feel languid to-day; I thought we were going to have a thunder-storm.

"And I am so dreadfully frightened at thunder!" she said, starting up, "oh, Mabel, do you really think there will be a storm?"

I said "I had been almost hoping there would be a storm, it would clear the air, perhaps, and take off this sultry feeling, and besides," I added, "though I was sorry for her, I really did enjoy to watch a good storm."

"I do think you and Gardie were made for each other," she exclaimed, with a laugh, "you are so alike in all your ideas and tastes."

"That was not to be wondered at," I remarked, "since he had chiefly formed mine, but," I added, laughing, "it is only opposite characters that dovetail into each other and make a perfect whole; similarities would always be coming into contact and marring the beauty; they would be either both grooves or projections, and never unite."

She laughed as she replied. "Well it is some comfort to think so, and yet I don't see how we ever are to suit one another, though certainly we are opposite enough."

I gave a little start as she spoke; the words pierced my heart like daggers, or like lightning upon my brain.

"You are nervous," she continued, drawing my head down so that it rested on the couch, and my face was turned away from her, "you thought that was lightning, but it was only a bird flew

past the jealousy." I did not speak, and she went on partly to herself, partly to me.

"I am very unhappy!" and she gave a deep sigh, "really there is a great deal to make me very unhappy; and you have the cruelty to laugh, Mabel!"

I observed "it must be the very superabundance of her happiness which resulted in such a complaint; what had she in her path but flowers?"

"Well, you will hardly believe, perhaps, that my illness was caused by misery, I do truly think. I was so silly while we were at Brackenhurst, and annoyed dear old Gardie, and made him miserable, and perhaps Lady Ruth, and—and—perhaps—Mr. Aubrey."

"You mean that he was vexed to see you let Clarence flirt with you, and neglect his cousin," I said, "but, dear Edith, that was not enough to make you ill, for I know it did not disturb Lady Ruth."

"But it annoyed Gardie," she repeated, "and, of course, I had no business to flirt with any one."

"Perhaps not with Clarence, who was known to be engaged to his cousin," I replied, "but I did not see why the humming-bird should be restricted from seeking nectar in other flowers."

"Why, don't you know that I am engaged,

too?" she asked, with an air of profound astonishment.

My doubts, and fears, and suspicions then, were at last to be solved! It seemed as if a ton weight of lead at that moment had sunk down upon my heart, but it was necessary to say something, and I could think of nothing more than the monosyllable, "No," very faintly uttered.

"You poor dear thing, I know your head aches, and I keep teasing you; there go to sleep," she said, patting my head, "and I will try and do the same."

"I would rather you went on talking, Edith; it is impossible to do anything when one is told to do it; but, if you talk, it is probable I may drop off; so, if I don't answer at the right moment, just go on all the same: it may be I shall be too lazy to speak, though I can listen."

"Well then, it is a compact, for I feel more in the humour for talking than anything else; so, as it seems you don't know much about me, I may as well begin from the beginning and tell you my history. I never remember having a mother; she must have died when I was quite an infant, but I recollect papa very well and a brother older than myself.

I can remember what a fuss was made about him. He had a tutor as soon as he could speak, I believe, and servants, and ponies, and horses : there never was a child so surrounded by grandeur and luxury. He was the heir of Calvers, a magnificent place in one of the Midland counties of England, and he was to be immensely rich ; I believe papa almost worshipped him. He was a little tyrant to me I know, and indeed every one had to yield to the heir. When he was about nine or ten, he got a fall from a horse, which, contrary to the advice of every one, he would try to ride, though it was not at all fit for him ; but nobody ever thought of controlling, only advising him ; so, as usual, he had his own way, and was soon thrown ; his spine was injured, I believe, for he always lay on a sofa afterwards, and was very sickly ; and, at the end of a year, he died. I suppose it would be impossible to describe the raving grief of papa ; but, in consequence of Leonard's death, I became the heiress, and in course of time all the indulgences that he had been permitted were transferred to me, and most thoroughly I enjoyed the change. The post of governess to such a pupil became soon a mere sinecure ; I found my power and revelled in it ; and, having been a slave

to Leonard, I became a tyrant to everyone, in my turn. Gardie was the only person I was afraid of, yet not exactly afraid, but he could manage me in some degree. He is a kind of twentieth cousin, and used to be a great deal at Calvers; he is what they call heir-at-law, I believe. I wonder he never let me ride my hobbies to my own destruction, as Leonard had been allowed to do; but, on the contrary, he always tried to control and civilize me in his gentle way, for authority I would never have submitted to. At last, poor papa fell ill, and was ordered to travel; I went with him, and enjoyed this change immensely, though I never would take the trouble to learn the languages: indeed, what would have been the use of it? We had a courier, of course, and then I had a governess from every country of Europe, I believe, who could talk for me; besides that, I need never have spoken at all, for a look, or the movement of a finger was understood, and obeyed by all about me.

“At length, we got to Rome, and there we fell in with my Gardie again. What pains he took to make me understand the spirit of the place! How he used to talk, and read to me, and take me about and try to make me feel an interest in all that was around me! But it was labour

lost. I cared only for amusement, and I had it to my heart's content.

"Well, poor papa got much worse; and, in spite of I don't know how many doctors, they said he could not live long, and then he became very anxious about me. We have no near relations: there are some cousins of mamma's living near Calvers, but I don't know much of them: I believe Dame Margaret and Gardie are the nearest; and, as he was with us, papa entreated him to take charge of me; in short, it was all done somehow through lawyers, I think; he became my guardian; and then, as Calvers would be his in case of my death, and papa was terribly afraid of somebody marrying me because I was an heiress, he begged and prayed him to make me his wife as soon as I should come of age; and, at last, to pacify him, I suppose, Gardie promised to do so, on condition that I were of the same mind. I am afraid he is not likely to be very anxious to keep me in that mind, for he has had trouble enough with me, and never could make me at all like—like you, Mabel, for instance; I have, indeed, now and then wondered—"

"How old were you when your papa died?" I asked, by way of interrupting her speculations.

“I was about twelve—we all came home together; that is poor papa was dead, but he was brought home, and then such a change as Gardie made in everything! By degrees, all my luxuries were given up. For the first year, I lived at Penzance with Dame Margaret and one governess, an Englishwoman, and my own maid. He himself took great pains in teaching, or trying to teach me: he put his sister, too, under my care, by way, as he said, of giving me some kind of sense of responsibility, but I was not a bit better; so, finding that he could make no impression, and that I was rendering Dame Margaret very uncomfortable, he dismissed my governess and my maid, and sent me to something like a school, not a regular boarding-school, but to a lady who had one or two children whose parents were in India. An excellent person she was, and took the greatest pains with us in every way. I never was happier than with her, and we had the best instruction, and masters for every accomplishment; there I learned to play and sing, and speak French; they could not make me learn German, but I mastered some little Italian. Gardie used to come and see me, and show so much interest; and sometimes he would take me and his sister to Calvers. There he made me acquainted with all the

people about me, and used to oblige me to work for the poor; (how I hated it!) and be civil and courteous to the farmers and their families; and he would always consult me, as he still does, in the management of the estate, and try to make me use my own discretion, and consider him as my bailiff, and give him my directions, and then he would correct me when I was wrong, and explain it all, and—oh dear! he is far too good for me! Mabel, I wonder he never took a fancy to *you*; you would suit him so much better.”

“And are you not very fond of him?” I asked, muffling my face in the sofa-cushions to disguise the unsteadiness of my voice.

“Oh yes! I love him dearly,” she replied, “and that was why it vexed me to think that I had grieved him at Brackenhurst, for he is so fond of me, so tender, so devoted. How kind of him it was to fit all this up for me! Perhaps you don’t know that these rooms are the facsimile of those which were mamma’s apartments at Calvers, and are mine now. I am so glad Calvers is to be his as well as mine: people say sometimes that he only wants to have me for the sake of Calvers. Mrs. Mainwaring told me it was said so one day, but I know that is not true, and yet—”

“Oh, Edith, you could not look at Mr.

Annesley and think such a thing of him for a moment!" I exclaimed, looking up, as indignation got the better of every other emotion. "It was wicked in Mrs Mainwaring to hint such a thing, she, who is so utterly incapable of estimating Mr. Annesley's character!"

"Oh, no!" Edith went on, "I did not believe it, for I'm sure he loves me for myself alone; but it vexed me that people should think so; no one could be more desirous for him to have Calvers than I am, only I—I was so very wrong the other day when he spoke to me about Mr. Aubrey at Brackenhurst—do you know I taunted him with Mrs. Mainwaring's words, and said he wanted to keep every one away from me, for fear of losing Calvers—I did indeed!"

"Oh, Edith, how could you?" I exclaimed.

"The moment after, I was so sorry; for he looked first so startled, and then so deeply pained. For a little while, he was quite silent, and then he said very slowly, and speaking very low, 'you know, Edith, I am only your guardian, all else is conditional; you are not to consider yourself in any way engaged to me, and there are yet three years before you can be called upon to make any decision. But, as your guardian, it is my duty not only to see that your choice, whenever

you make a choice, be a prudent one, but to keep you from doing wrong either to yourself or others.'"

"So like him!" I ejaculated, "how grieved you must have felt!"

"I did," she answered, "and yet some demon within would not suffer me to own it; and I made a flippant reply. 'It was very well to talk so,' I said, 'but he knew that he had me in his power:' and then he became quite stern, and declared, 'That as long as he had the power, he should exercise it, with God's help, for my good and that of others,' but he made no further allusion to my wicked taunt, nor did he make the slightest alteration in his kindness, or attention afterwards, but seemed utterly to have forgotten it. It was a keener punishment than anything he could have devised, though I am sure he did not intend it so, and all this made me so unhappy, that I do believe it caused my illness; and how kind he was through it all! Do you know, I could not help wishing sometimes I might die, and then the property would be really his; I told him so one day, and he talked so sweetly to me, and shewed me what a foolish wicked wish it was, and how careful I ought to be of a life that would be of so much consequence to others, and never gave the

least hint that Calvers might be his by marriage, but said, that the Grange was all he wished for, he could never love any place as he did this, and that, since Providence had seen fit to take all else away from him, his whole affection was centred in it, and he would not exchange it for a palace."

I felt a throb of pleasure at that in the midst of the desolation of all my feelings: it was like a sunbeam lighting up the blackened walls of some beautiful edifice that fire has scorched and ruined. But I could not speak; my heart was indeed melting away because of my trouble; I had no tears to shed, but I remained stupified as it were, and speechless. Edith thought I was asleep, for she passed her hand gently over my head, and murmured, "Poor Mabel, I knew my tale would weary you."

We remained thus for a long time; I had no heart to move or speak; I do not know even if I felt. I seemed benumbed, and to have no power to look either forward or backward.

After some time, Miss Annesley came up to see what we were doing; she opened the door gently, probably expecting to find Edith asleep, and I felt the latter raise her hand as she said, "Hush!" but it was of no use to lie prostrate there; it was neces-

sary to go home and look this matter calmly and steadily in the face, so I raised my head, oh, how heavy it felt! and said, "I am not asleep, Miss Annesley, and indeed it is time for me to go home, or I shall be benighted, I think," for it had grown very dark.

They both tried to persuade me to remain, and Miss Annesley said she thought it was going to pour with rain, and I had better let her man drive me home, but I had something within to drive me, at least away from what had hitherto been my Paradise; and, resisting all efforts to detain me, I hurried on my things, and set off for the Rectory without looking behind me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADEL.—“ Was hast du ? Du siehst so kummervoll ? ”

FRA.—“ Es ist euer Wille dass ich mich todt schmachten soll ; in den Jahren der Hoffnung macht ihr mich verzweifeln. Mein Gott ! ich habe keinen Blutstropfen in mir, der nicht eure wäre, keinen Sinn als euch zu lieben, und zu thun was euch gefällt. ”

Und du warst, mein Freund, meinem Herzen so nahe ! —

GOETHE.

WHAT utter misery must our first parents have experienced, when expelled from their glorious home !

I had often tried to imagine their feelings ; how they must have recalled the bright sunny days when every thing was so full of peace and happiness ; the great and high privileges they had known ; of which perhaps the loss first taught them fully to estimate the value ; all the enjoyments which at that miserable moment they must have felt had never been sufficiently appreciated ; there might, too, have been many

regrets for minor things—objects, inanimate, loved haunts, spots endeared by peculiar associations—many things independant of the great whole, to which they had learned to cling ; but all these would doubtless be swallowed up, and almost forgotten in the one overwhelming sorrow of knowing themselves exiles from the immediate presence of God.

“ No more of talk, where God or angel-guest
With man as with his friend, familiar used
To sit indulgent.”

In my musings, I had often pondered over these feelings, and tried to realize them : but, as I closed the iron-gates behind me, and crossed the moat that evening, I felt it was no longer a fanciful speculation ; by comparison, I could understand fully their feelings, and could see, as with their eyes, the cold desolate aspect of the world into which they, like myself, were thrust.

Very desolate it looked at that moment ! my poor heart cast forth from the nest where it had so long made itself a home, fluttered out over the waste before it, like the dove, sent forth from the ark, and like her, too, found no rest for the sole of its foot—unlike alas ! in that for me there was no return, no kind hand would be extended to draw me in again to the old shelter.

As soon as I had passed the gates and was concealed from view, I slackened my pace, and tried to think how I should meet this great blow. There was but a short distance between the moat-gates and the village, so I turned aside into the belt of plantation which fringed the river, in order to pursue my thoughts.

The sun had not yet set, but a deep gloom hung over the earth ; it had been one of those still, hazy days, when the orb of day has no power to penetrate the thick covering of clouds, and the oppressive atmosphere betokens an approaching storm. The darkness was almost that of night, and low mutterings of distant thunder made themselves heard from time to time, but the atmosphere was in unison with my thoughts, and I was indifferent to the warnings. I wandered on till I came to the bend of the river, where I once spent the day with Clarence, fishing, and where I had first heard of Edith Marsh. All my wild conjectures about her at that time recurred to me, and I smiled at the recollection of her supposed poverty, and my anxiety to remove every obstacle to their union by sacrificing my own mite. I compared these feelings with those now in my heart, and wondered

whether, had I been then really called to make the sacrifice, it would have given me an agony like the present.

I tried to think if I had ever incautiously betrayed myself to Mr. Annesley's eyes, and then I shrank back on remembering his peculiar faculty of reading one's thoughts, and felt how legible my own must sometimes—always have been, even to eyes of less penetration; yet he had often, oh how often! shewn so much tenderness towards me. With Edith, I had frequently seen him annoyed and almost stern, but I had never experienced anything but the most considerate gentleness from him. Did he love me?—and only consider himself bound by honour to Edith? I sat down in the same spot where I had been sitting the year before, and, drawing up my knees, leaned my throbbing brow upon them, and smiled as the thought crossed my mind, for it did but cross it, I would not entertain it. It was only as a child, I repeated, that he had been kind to me; he had pitied my situation at home, and taken interest in one so ready to learn, he had formed my mind, and took pleasure in seeing his own reflected in it.

He had never tried to excite any interest in me—never!—and yet sometimes words, and looks,

and tones, had sent such a thrill through me; but how foolish to think of these things now! and, at the same moment, the little incident of the pin recurred to me—he did not even suppose that I had set value enough upon it to keep it, and then my mind ran over all that had passed upon the archery-ground—yet I could hardly be said to think, I was but feeling. All at once, I was startled by a bright flash of lightning, and a moment after, a crash of thunder broke the deep stillness of the sultry air. For an instant, I felt a throb of fear, but it was only momentary; the war of the elements seemed to nerve me. I resumed the seat from which I had started; and, clasping my hands round my knees as before, looked up to watch the clouds.

For a while, a dead silence reigned, then a few large drops of rain hissed heavily through the trees, and then they ceased, and all was still again. The storm seemed to be gathering up its force, as the tiger gathers its limbs in silence to spring upon its victim. Presently, there was another quivering flash, and anon, after a pause, a more distant roll of thunder. Again all was still, and then I heard a vague, far-off sound of rising wind, rushing onward; nearer and nearer it came, roaring in the tops

of the lofty forest-trees, bending the saplings to the ground almost, and bringing with it torrents of rain, which in a moment pierced through everything. The little river, a minute ago so calmly purling along its stony bed, now rushed and boiled, and would not be confined within its banks: flash after flash of red lightning seemed to run along the ground; and, above the fury of the wind, the roaring of the water, and the hissing of the rain, I could hear from time to time the crash of the thunder.

It was a terrific sound; and, though I knew the full danger of my situation, and could see the rifted stems of the noble trees beneath which I sat, bend, and could hear them creak and groan, as the mighty tempest bowed their strong heads before it, I felt an exultation that made me indifferent to the peril, and careless of the pelting rain which now saturated my clothes. I could have clapped my hands, and shrieked in a wild sympathy with the fury which raged around me.

Presently, uttering a plaintive cry of fear, a wood-pigeon which had been shaken from its resting-place, came borne by the force of the wind and fell struggling and fluttering into my lap. I lifted it, and smoothed its ruffled feathers, laid it in my bosom, and covered it carefully with my

dripping cloak. At that moment, a blaze of light, more vivid than any I had seen, seemed to envelope me ; and, whilst I involuntarily crouched and hid my face on my knees, one of the outer trees of the group that sheltered me was split from top to bottom, the noise of its fall mingling with the crash and roar of the thunder which accompanied the stroke.

I sate still and trembling, hardly knowing whether I was not struck myself, and afraid to lift my head, or move. It was the climax of the storm : a momentary stillness followed that awful crash, and then the wind and rain gradually subsided, the lightning quivered fainter and fainter, a few mutterings of thunder rolled away into the distance, and the clouds began to disperse ; the turbid and discoloured waters of the little river sank murmuring back into their usual channel, falling as rapidly as they had risen ; and, in half an hour, the sky was cleared, the wind lulled, and the slanting rays of the setting sun shone out over the brilliant landscape, glittering with the rain-drops which hung from the leaves, or sparkled on the grass, like diamonds.

I turned to look at the noble tree which lay shivered, scorched, and barkless behind me, and then rising, I threw myself on my knees and

offered up my heartfelt thanks for my merciful preservation, the more merciful as I had so presumptuously exposed myself to it. I opened my cloak to look at the frightened dove, which still clung tremblingly to me, glancing up into my face with its bright, half-timid eye. I stroked and caressed it, "Poor terrified creature," I said, "like myself, a cruel storm has driven you from the home you thought so safe; are you come to shew me what my future work must be? no longer to lean trustingly on another, but to stand alone, and be a help to those who are weaker than myself." The poor bird looked up so meekly, and clung so confidently to me, that I felt half disposed to carry it home; but I have always had an unconquerable dislike to keeping birds; they are so helpless when tamed, so exposed to the assaults of their natural enemies, and so unable to defend themselves when caged or pinioned; and then they are so peculiarly formed for freedom. To coop up, behind bars, creatures, made as they are to traverse space and soar up into the free air, seems too great a refinement of cruelty; every animal, when tamed, retains some of its native liberty, and many are even benefitted: but a wild bird, deprived of its freedom, is debarred from the greatest enjoyment of its

nature, and I could never listen with anything but sadness to the note of the poor captive, whose song was only meant to be trilled forth among the trees of its own free happy woods.

So, after caressing the poor dove for a few minutes, I opened my cloak and gave it liberty. It rested on my hand for a minute, glancing around with a half scared look, and then gradually regaining the power of using its wings, it circled two or three times round my head, and, uttering its plaintive cry, darted off to rejoin the mate from whom it had been severed.

And now it was time to think of myself: I was wet through and through, but the storm had done me good: it had roused and braced me, and made me feel that I was not made to sink down to earth and lie crouching there under life's first trial. Endurance was to be my portion, it had been shewn me from infancy, and now the dove had taught me that I might in time, perhaps, do more than suffer—I might help. Once, a kind hand had been stretched out to support me, I had leaned upon it too utterly; and, though even now it was not withdrawn, I felt that I must put it from me. Well, I could be thankful for the help that had been extended to me; the friend might still be mine, only I must remember that he was

but a friend, and it would be necessary to forego all the dear pleasures that had been so prized—and to see them enjoyed by another, and she incapable of appreciating their worth; and to know that he feels this; and see that he looks to me for sympathy—some evil spirit kept suggesting to my mind, as shivering with wet and cold, and the yet more icy feeling at my heart, I walked heedlessly on towards the Lodge-gates. I was just emerging from the belt into the avenue, when I heard a horse's step; and, looking up, recognised Mr. Annesley: I had not expected his return till the following day.

He drew in his reins as he saw me, dripping and miserable as I must have looked.

"Mabel!" he exclaimed, springing from his horse, "what brings you here and in this state?" he added as he took hold of my wet clothes. "You must come into the Lodge, and have these things taken off, while I ride on to send dry clothes and the carriage to take you home. You cannot walk," he continued, seeing I was bent on going forward, "the road is under water."

"A little more or less is of no consequence now," I said, with a laugh that sounded to myself like a mockery, "I am nothing but a bodily Undine, so I may as well go home at once."

“Mabel,” he reiterated, “you cannot cross the road, the water is knee-deep: look at my horse’s legs; nay, if you will persist in going home, you must submit to be carried,” and, before I could be aware of his intention, he had raised me in his arms, and placed me on the horse. Then, springing up behind, he held me firmly in his left arm while he put his horse into a canter, and called to the lodge-keeper to open the gate quickly. I felt almost angry at being borne thus helplessly, like a sack of wet sand, through the village, or, at least, past the two or three houses that lay in our way, but there was, at the same time, the delicious feeling of rest and security; it was the last time I should lean upon that strong arm, and I laid my head upon his shoulder, and abandoned myself to the delight of the moment. Few words passed between us; once or twice, he looked down as a gentle nurse would look upon her child; but though he held me firmly it was lightly, and, as soon as we reached the Rectory-gate, which was in five minutes, he dismounted quickly, and then taking me round the waist lifted me to the ground, and bade me not stop to speak, but run in and attend to old Phœbe’s directions, adding, as he rode off, “I must hurry back to poor little Edith,

she will have been frightened out of her wits by the storm."

Happy, cherished Edith ! yet with all his anxiety to spare and shield her, he had stopped to think of *me* first ! The idea was a sweet one, but I might not indulge it. However, I had no time to torment myself, for the sound of horse's feet and Mr. Annesley's voice had brought my father out of his study ; and, when he saw me stand like a river nymph, dripping in the hall, he accosted me with more anger than anxiety in his accent, as he inquired,

"What folly now had led me to get myself into that plight, and where I had been wandering ?"

I began to explain that the storm had overtaken me as soon as I left the Grange, when Phoebe appeared on the scene ; and, pouring forth a stream of words half scolding, half coaxing, led me upstairs, while my father muttering something about my being as silly as Edith, not to have seen by the clouds that a storm was brewing, retreated to his own room.

But I did not escape utterly harmless, in spite of my constitutional inaptitude to take cold ; I woke next morning stiff and sore, notwithstanding all Phoebe's nostrums of the preceding evening, and she would not let me attempt to rise. I am

not sure that I offered any very determined resistance to her authority, my heart was as sore as my body, and I felt it pleasant to lie still and be cared for and petted ; it was a new situation for me at home, and when my father saw that I was ill, all the asperity of his manner subsided into desire to make me forget his harsh greeting of the day before. With Phœbe, I believe, I was always a favourite. It is a calumny to say that servants always follow the lead of the house, they have a strong sense of justice, and vehemently take up the cause of one who they consider to be put upon, as they term it. It was nothing to Phœbe that I was inferior in intellect or person to Amy.

“ Miss Amy,” she used to say, “ might be very clever, but Miss Mabel was never one thing to a person’s face and another behind their back, and there would come a time when people would see which was the better.”

Poor Phœbe, I fear her very love of justice made her a little unjust to Amy.

At this time, however, I was very indifferent to the justice or injustice of the matter, I only wanted to be quiet, and, as it were, to recover my breath before I had to take my place once more in the great race of life. So it suited me very well to be thought ill enough to keep my bed. Like the “ Convalescent” in

I replied that I then
friend to the Forster
to hear her take up his

"Well, dear, you know
proud of his wealth," she
deservedly so, for it pro-
him; but then again his
connected I've been to
woman, and his child-
ated; young Sholto, es-
by Mr. Annesley, very
handsome, and moreove-
hurst."

I smiled, and then I said

"Clever? in so far as
knows some schoolboy
mere combination of flesh
a fresh complexion and
face set in a frame of
Brackenhurst? Mrs. M
a worse hit than when
of advantages." I con-
ideal; a mind imbued
high and noble the
countenance express-
lofty and refined, even
the *disinherited* of

below of my father's study, or sat on his horse and talked to him within, and made inquiries for him, and often held long conversations, every word of which reached my ear. Alas, how greedily those tones I listened to! One day I remember Amy coming in while he was below, and I buried my face in the pillow affecting to be asleep, I trust it was a pardonable deception. She went to the window which was near the bed, intending probably to look out, but seeing Mr. Annesley below, she turned out and spoke; and I heard him say, "Ah, my dear! how is the little Undine? I hope better; I hope she will get up soon, and get well, Edith is wild to get up some charades and will not have anything done without Mabel;" and then they went on talking, and every nerve in my body seemed to become an ear to drink in those musical tones.

In fact, it was only for a few days that I could keep up the pretence of illness, and at the end of the week I was about again as usual. Miss Annesley and Edith had been to the Rectory every day, and daily I had received a bouquet of choice flowers, and a basket of fresh fruit with "Miss Marsh's love;" but Dame Margaret, like many another nervous invalid, had a dread of infection, and Edith was never suffered to enter my room for fear of I know not what danger.

So it was not till I was able to go about again that we met, and one of my first thoughts was to thank her for the lovely flowers and delicious fruit with which she had so kindly shewn her remembrance of me.

"I send you fruit and flowers, Mabel?" she exclaimed, with a startled air, "why you are laughing at me! I ought to have thought of it I feel now, but—well, I may as well confess it, the idea never came into my head. How I wish I had done it, you would have enjoyed them so!" and she looked quite vexed and sorry.

"Well, but I really have had them every day," I replied, "I meant no sarcasm, my room at this moment is full of exquisite flowers from the Grange, sent with Miss Marsh's love."

"Ah!" she said, laughing, "then it was dear old Gardie; so like him, doing the thing for me, when he saw I had not the wit, or rather the good feeling to do it for myself; but he might have told me of it—however that's past now, I want to ask you about charades, Mabel. Dame Margaret wishes to ask some people to dinner and I protest against such a dull proceeding alone; Gardie, you know, rather takes my view of the case, but he would have nothing done

till you were well, so now I want to consult you."

"I remember something being said about charades before," I observed, alluding to the evening in the summer-house.

"Exactly so," she replied, "and now here comes Amy just at the right moment, we can all three lay our wise heads together and beat out an idea between us, perhaps."

And the consultation began, but I fear I played a very indifferent part in it, for my mind had plenty of occupation in turning over what Edith had let fall. And so those daily remembrances had been Mr. Annesley's, and only sent in Edith's name, perhaps, that I might not construe them into particular attentions; and as the thought crossed me that he had read my heart, I rose involuntarily and walked to the window, as if by a change of place I could get away from the feeling of shame which made my cheeks so hot. But a sharp exclamation from Edith brought me back to the table, and, for a few moments, to the subject under discussion; and then, gradually, my mind wandered away again on the thought that "Miss Marsh's love" might have been only a cover for what he could not express from himself, and yet why should

he not send his love to one whom he had known from infancy? But I feared to tread long or far on such treacherous ground, and tried to force my mind back to the subject before me; but even that led me a-field again, for he had told me that it was Edith who awaited my convalescence to do anything in it, and now she said it was he who had held her back.

I was aroused from my reverie by Edith's arms being thrown round my neck as she came behind, and kissing me, said with a laugh.

"You absent thing! you have not helped us one bit through our difficulties, I shall tell Gardie he might as well have let Amy and me arrange it a week ago, and then it would have been all settled, and the invitations out by this time."

"I am a mere log in such matters, humming-bird," I answered, "if I had put in my voice, it would only have increased the difficulties you know."

"It is a matter altogether beneath Sir Isaac," Amy observed tauntingly, "you forget that, Edith."

"I know that Sir Isaac can do more than speculate on abstruse questions sometimes," Edith said, as she clung round me, "there were no metaphysics in my sick room, whatever physic there

might have been." We all laughed at the humming-bird turning punster, and Amy continued,

"You forget the learned disquisitions you used sometimes to amuse me by describing, Edith."

"Oh that was only when Gardie and Sir Isaac met, and the former was tired of prattling to me and listening to my prattle," Edith ran on; "that did not happen often, for generally Sir Isaac crept away when Gardie came, and after he had been talking to me for some time, he used to look round so blank to find nobody but Dame Margaret or, perhaps, no one at all."

"Oh fie! you wicked little humming-bird, to tell such stories," I said, pretending to box her ears.

"To tell such tales she means, Edith," put in Amy, "she has no business to discuss metaphysics with one man and love with another in this way."

"As much of one as the other," I said.

"Love?" asked Edith turning round, "who is the favoured one, Amy?"

"What, don't you remember the water-dog of Brackenhurst?" she asked, laughing.

"And does she really listen to his love?" Edith inquired, "Mrs. Mainwaring was telling Dame Margaret and Gardie so the other day, and he turned

away quite angrily, 'Mabel listen to Sholto Forster, Mrs. Mainwaring? you don't know her if you think that,' he said. And when she went on with innumerable proofs—ah, you may blush, Mabel,—he told her he thought it unwomanly in any one to repeat such things if she had seen them, and walked out of the room."

"Such things! what things, Edith?" I asked in distress, "what can Mrs. Mainwaring have invented?"

"Nothing worth crying about, dear Undine," she replied, kissing me, "you know no one minds what Mrs. Mainwaring says."

I was not crying or thinking of doing so, for there was in Edith's words much that would rather have moved me to smiles; but I was vexed that Mrs. Mainwaring should make me the subject of her gossip, and distressed to know what she had said. However, Edith went on,

"But I must not stay chattering here any longer. I shall tell Dame Margaret what we have arranged, Amy, and I shall make Gardie give you a scolding, Miss Undine, for withholding your help now, and refusing to be more than a spectator when the time comes; so good bye!" she exclaimed laughing, and kissing the tips of her tiny fingers as she tripped down the steps

into the garden, and ran off towards the Grange.

“So that matter’s settled,” was Amy’s remark as she left the room; and I was not much wiser about it than when we met.

CHAPTER XIX.

"J'avais alors dans le cœur et dans la tête, plus d'amour pour un autre qu'il n'y en peut raisonnablement tenir."

ALPHONSE KARR.

WE saw nothing more of Mr. Annesley till the day fixed on for the party at the Grange; he had left home again, declaring the ladies understood these things better than he, so he would not interfere with their arrangements. The same words were tolerably applicable to myself, and as I was not to take any active part in the performances, I indulged myself by spending the time in the library, that Amy and Edith passed in the bower-room discussing and planning.

At last the important day arrived. There was a large party at dinner, and it was the first time I had ever seen the rooms prepared really

for company, for hitherto the small parties of friends who had met round that dinner table had never been assembled with any formality. Mr. Annesley had a peculiar aversion to large state dinner parties ; no one was more hospitable, but, he said, compared with his neighbours he was poor, and to vie with their entertainments he would be obliged to expend more than he had any right to do, and after all, probably fail either to give or to receive as much pleasure, as if he received his friends in the sociable quiet style that was more consistent with his means and his taste. So, though he had very often small parties of six or eight, there was never any display, but much comfort, and a great deal of very pleasant conversation. Even the least intellectual enjoyed the parties at the Grange, for Mr. Annesley was an excellent host, he had the happy art of getting people together who mutually suited each other, and then without any obtrusive fussiness, so arranging them and leading conversation, that the best and most advantageous qualities of each were brought out almost unconsciously. For once, however, to please Edith, he had departed from his usual habits, and allowed her to ask as many as she pleased and to make what arrangements she liked, of

which permission the Lady of Calvers had availed herself to the utmost.

There was, as I have said, a large dinner party; all those of the immediate neighbourhood, and a great many strangers from Winterford, and even more distant places. For my own part I found no pleasure in it. That odious bracelet I had won at the archery marred much of my enjoyment; I had been so set upon by Amy and Edith, Mrs. Mainwaring and even Miss Annesley, that I was absolutely forced into wearing it, they argued that it was like the Crown Jewels, necessary to be worn on public occasions, such as the present, and ought not to be considered in the light of private property; while, on the other hand, I knew that Sholto Forster would construe its being worn into a particular compliment to himself, so that my unlucky luck was a source of unspeakable disquiet to me. At the table, too, owing to Edith's wilfulness, nobody seemed to be placed as they wished. That I must be far from Mr. Annesley, I knew of course was inevitable, but Amy had an old gentleman who cared for nothing but his dinner. Miss Forster was equally ill-matched, Sholto Forster was neighbour to a portly Winterford dame, who seemed chiefly occupied in watching the proceedings of her awkward daughters and

sounding their praises to him, under which infliction his expression was anything but amiable, and my own neighbour was an old Colonel, who could think of nothing more interesting to talk about, than the several battles he had been engaged in, which he detailed fully for my edification. I tried to give him my attention, but the subject was not pleasing, and finding after a time that my answers were not as pertinent as they might have been, he turned from me and addressed himself to Amy who was opposite, and who, by an amused look, and one or two well-timed remarks had won his admiration. So finding my attention at liberty, I gave myself up to observation of the company, and presently my ear was caught by the sound of Mrs. Mainwaring's voice, who was on the left of Mr. Annesley.

"This is altogether a delightful arrangement of yours Mr. Annesley," I heard her say, "it is not very often that you deign to throw open the Grange, but I suppose we must attribute it all to the little lady in the middle of the table."

Mr. Annesley looked annoyed, as he always did when Mrs. Mainwaring attacked him, but he allowed that the whole had been more his sister's and Edith's arrangement than his own.

"Ah, I thought so," she continued, "we all understand that, don't we Mrs. Aubrey?"

Mrs. Aubrey, who was opposite, replied by a quiet smile, and Mrs. Mainwaring went on.

"I was at something of this sort not long ago at Lord Harley's, charming person Lady Harley is; Mrs. Aubrey you would like her, so superior! and the dear girls so accomplished! 'my dear Mrs. Mainwaring,' they always say, 'you are the only person who can make papa do anything,' and indeed, I believe it's quite true. Lord Harley, you know is a first rate man, Mr. Annesley. The girls carried off all the prizes at the Markdale Archery meeting. Ah, by the by, I see Mabel wears her prize," she added, bending forward to look at me, and then touching her arm with a nod and a smile to Mr. Sholto Forster. "And what are we to do this evening, Mr. Annesley?"

"Indeed, Mrs. Mainwaring, you must not apply to me for a programme, I have left it to the ladies," I heard him say.

"Quite right," she continued, "charmingly Edith looks to-day. Yes, my dear," nodding to her, "we are talking of you, dear girl! Oh, Mrs. Forster, did you hear that dreadful scandal in Winterford last week? Mr. Annesley don't listen you know,"

making at the same time a movement with her beautifully gloved hand towards him. "Eh? oh you naughty man! so like you! Well, never mind dear Mrs. Forster, I'll tell you all about it in the drawing-room. Tell it to Mr. Forster, Mr. Annesley? No of course she won't, will you dear? Ah, there's Miss Annesley going to move. Yes, now I have it, Miss Annesley's so like the Marchioness of Hardfield. Sweet creature the Marchioness is, always so well dressed, and very clever, knows all the dead languages! Oh, Mister—" to her other neighbour, "I beg your pardon, will you pick up my fan and handkerchief?—Yeess," with a hissing sound—"thank you," and having collected all her things, and shaken out her flounces, she followed the other ladies to the drawing-rooms.

"You looked so bored by papa, at dinner," was said by a good-natured looking Irish girl, as we entered the room together, "he is so fond of talking over all his battles which nobody cares to listen to, as we often tell him."

"I am afraid he was more bored by me," I replied, "for I felt myself a very stupid companion, and was glad my sister made amends for me."

We seated ourselves in a window recess, at a

sary to go home and look this matter calmly and steadily in the face, so I raised my head, oh, how heavy it felt! and said, "I am not asleep, Miss Annesley, and indeed it is time for me to go home, or I shall be benighted, I think," for it had grown very dark.

They both tried to persuade me to remain, and Miss Annesley said she thought it was going to pour with rain, and I had better let her man drive me home, but I had something within to drive me, at least away from what had hitherto been my Paradise; and, resisting all efforts to detain me, I hurried on my things, and set off for the Rectory without looking behind me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADEL.—“ Was hast du? Du siehst so kummervoll?”

FRA.—“ Es ist euer Wille dass ich mich todt schmachten soll; in den Jahren der Hoffnung macht ihr mich verzweifeln. Mein Gott! ich habe keinen Blutstropfen in mir, der nicht eure wäre, keinen Sinn als euch zu lieben, und zu thun was euch gefällt.”

Und du warst, mein Freund, meinem Herzen so nahe!—

GOETHE.

WHAT utter misery must our first parents have experienced, when expelled from their glorious home!

I had often tried to imagine their feelings; how they must have recalled the bright sunny days when every thing was so full of peace and happiness; the great and high privileges they had known; of which perhaps the loss first taught them fully to estimate the value; all the enjoyments which at that miserable moment they must have felt had never been sufficiently appreciated; there might, too, have been many

regrets for minor things—objects, inanimate, loved haunts, spots endeared by peculiar associations—many things independent of the great whole, to which they had learned to cling; but all these would doubtless be swallowed up, and almost forgotten in the one overwhelming sorrow of knowing themselves exiles from the immediate presence of God.

“ No more of talk, where God or angel-guest
With man as with his friend, familiar used
To sit indulgent.”

In my musings, I had often pondered over these feelings, and tried to realize them: but, as I closed the iron-gates behind me, and crossed the moat that evening, I felt it was no longer a fanciful speculation; by comparison, I could understand fully their feelings, and could see, as with their eyes, the cold desolate aspect of the world into which they, like myself, were thrust.

Very desolate it looked at that moment! my poor heart cast forth from the nest where it had so long made itself a home, fluttered out over the waste before it, like the dove, sent forth from the ark, and like her, too, found no rest for the sole of its foot—unlike alas! in that for me there was no return, no kind hand would be extended to draw me in again to the old shelter.

As soon as I had passed the gates and was concealed from view, I slackened my pace, and tried to think how I should meet this great blow. There was but a short distance between the moat-gates and the village, so I turned aside into the belt of plantation which fringed the river, in order to pursue my thoughts.

The sun had not yet set, but a deep gloom hung over the earth; it had been one of those still, hazy days, when the orb of day has no power to penetrate the thick covering of clouds, and the oppressive atmosphere betokens an approaching storm. The darkness was almost that of night, and low mutterings of distant thunder made themselves heard from time to time, but the atmosphere was in unison with my thoughts, and I was indifferent to the warnings. I wandered on till I came to the bend of the river, where I once spent the day with Clarence, fishing, and where I had first heard of Edith Marsh. All my wild conjectures about her at that time recurred to me, and I smiled at the recollection of her supposed poverty, and my anxiety to remove every obstacle to their union by sacrificing my own mite. I compared these feelings with those now in my heart, and wondered

whether, had I been then really called to make the sacrifice, it would have given me an agony like the present.

I tried to think if I had ever incautiously betrayed myself to Mr. Annesley's eyes, and then I shrank back on remembering his peculiar faculty of reading one's thoughts, and felt how legible my own must sometimes—always have been, even to eyes of less penetration; yet he had often, oh how often! shewn so much tenderness towards me. With Edith, I had frequently seen him annoyed and almost stern, but I had never experienced anything but the most considerate gentleness from him. Did he love me?—and only consider himself bound by honour to Edith? I sat down in the same spot where I had been sitting the year before, and, drawing up my knees, leaned my throbbing brow upon them, and smiled as the thought crossed my mind, for it did but cross it, I would not entertain it. It was only as a child, I repeated, that he had been kind to me; he had pitied my situation at home, and taken interest in one so ready to learn, he had formed my mind, and took pleasure in seeing his own reflected in it.

He had never tried to excite any interest in me—never!—and yet sometimes words, and looks,

and tones, had sent such a thrill through me; but how foolish to think of these things now! and, at the same moment, the little incident of the pin recurred to me—he did not even suppose that I had set value enough upon it to keep it, and then my mind ran over all that had passed upon the archery-ground—yet I could hardly be said to think, I was but feeling. All at once, I was startled by a bright flash of lightning, and a moment after, a crash of thunder broke the deep stillness of the sultry air. For an instant, I felt a throb of fear, but it was only momentary; the war of the elements seemed to nerve me. I resumed the seat from which I had started; and, clasping my hands round my knees as before, looked up to watch the clouds.

For a while, a dead silence reigned, then a few large drops of rain hissed heavily through the trees, and then they ceased, and all was still again. The storm seemed to be gathering up its force, as the tiger gathers its limbs in silence to spring upon its victim. Presently, there was another quivering flash, and anon, after a pause, a more distant roll of thunder. Again all was still, and then I heard a vague, far-off sound of rising wind, rushing onward; nearer and nearer it came, roaring in the tops

of the lofty forest-trees, bending the saplings to the ground almost, and bringing with it torrents of rain, which in a moment pierced through everything. The little river, a minute ago so calmly purling along its stony bed, now rushed and boiled, and would not be confined within its banks: flash after flash of red lightning seemed to run along the ground; and, above the fury of the wind, the roaring of the water, and the hissing of the rain, I could hear from time to time the crash of the thunder.

It was a terrific sound; and, though I knew the full danger of my situation, and could see the rifted stems of the noble trees beneath which I sate, bend, and could hear them creak and groan, as the mighty tempest bowed their strong heads before it, I felt an exultation that made me indifferent to the peril, and careless of the pelting rain which now saturated my clothes. I could have clapped my hands, and shrieked in a wild sympathy with the fury which raged around me.

Presently, uttering a plaintive cry of fear, a wood-pigeon which had been shaken from its resting-place, came borne by the force of the wind and fell struggling and fluttering into my lap. I lifted it, and smoothed its ruffled feathers, laid it in my bosom, and covered it carefully with my

dripping cloak. At that moment, a blaze of light, more vivid than any I had seen, seemed to envelope me ; and, whilst I involuntarily crouched and hid my face on my knees, one of the outer trees of the group that sheltered me was split from top to bottom, the noise of its fall mingling with the crash and roar of the thunder which accompanied the stroke.

I sate still and trembling, hardly knowing whether I was not struck myself, and afraid to lift my head, or move. It was the climax of the storm : a momentary stillness followed that awful crash, and then the wind and rain gradually subsided, the lightning quivered fainter and fainter, a few mutterings of thunder rolled away into the distance, and the clouds began to disperse ; the turbid and discoloured waters of the little river sank murmuring back into their usual channel, falling as rapidly as they had risen ; and, in half an hour, the sky was cleared, the wind lulled, and the slanting rays of the setting sun shone out over the brilliant landscape, glittering with the rain-drops which hung from the leaves, or sparkled on the grass, like diamonds.

I turned to look at the noble tree which lay shivered, scorched, and barkless behind me, and then rising, I threw myself on my knees and

offered up my heartfelt thanks for my merciful preservation, the more merciful as I had so presumptuously exposed myself to it. I opened my cloak to look at the frightened dove, which still clung tremblingly to me, glancing up into my face with its bright, half-timid eye. I stroked and caressed it, "Poor terrified creature," I said, "like myself, a cruel storm has driven you from the home you thought so safe; are you come to shew me what my future work must be? no longer to lean trustingly on another, but to stand alone, and be a help to those who are weaker than myself." The poor bird looked up so meekly, and clung so confidently to me, that I felt half disposed to carry it home; but I have always had an unconquerable dislike to keeping birds; they are so helpless when tamed, so exposed to the assaults of their natural enemies, and so unable to defend themselves when caged or pinioned; and then they are so peculiarly formed for freedom. To coop up, behind bars, creatures, made as they are to traverse space and soar up into the free air, seems too great a refinement of cruelty; every animal, when tamed, retains some of its native liberty, and many are even benefitted: but a wild bird, deprived of its freedom, is debarred from the greatest enjoyment of its

nature, and I could never listen with anything but sadness to the note of the poor captive, whose song was only meant to be trilled forth among the trees of its own free happy woods.

So, after caressing the poor dove for a few minutes, I opened my cloak and gave it liberty. It rested on my hand for a minute, glancing around with a half scared look, and then gradually regaining the power of using its wings, it circled two or three times round my head, and, uttering its plaintive cry, darted off to rejoin the mate from whom it had been severed.

And now it was time to think of myself: I was wet through and through, but the storm had done me good: it had roused and braced me, and made me feel that I was not made to sink down to earth and lie crouching there under life's first trial. Endurance was to be my portion, it had been shewn me from infancy, and now the dove had taught me that I might in time, perhaps, do more than suffer—I might help. Once, a kind hand had been stretched out to support me, I had leaned upon it too utterly; and, though even now it was not withdrawn, I felt that I must put it from me. Well, I could be thankful for the help that had been extended to me; the friend might still be mine, only I must remember that he was

but a friend, and it would be necessary to forego all the dear pleasures that had been so prized—and to see them enjoyed by another, and she incapable of appreciating their worth; and to know that he feels this; and see that he looks to me for sympathy—some evil spirit kept suggesting to my mind, as shivering with wet and cold, and the yet more icy feeling at my heart, I walked heedlessly on towards the Lodge-gates. I was just emerging from the belt into the avenue, when I heard a horse's step; and, looking up, recognised Mr. Annesley: I had not expected his return till the following day.

He drew in his reins as he saw me, dripping and miserable as I must have looked.

"Mabel!" he exclaimed, springing from his horse, "what brings you here and in this state?" he added as he took hold of my wet clothes. "You must come into the Lodge, and have these things taken off, while I ride on to send dry clothes and the carriage to take you home. You cannot walk," he continued, seeing I was bent on going forward, "the road is under water."

"A little more or less is of no consequence now," I said, with a laugh that sounded to myself like a mockery, "I am nothing but a bodily Undine, so I may as well go home at once."

“Mabel,” he reiterated, “you cannot cross the road, the water is knee-deep: look at my horse’s legs; nay, if you will persist in going home, you must submit to be carried,” and, before I could be aware of his intention, he had raised me in his arms, and placed me on the horse. Then, springing up behind, he held me firmly in his left arm while he put his horse into a canter, and called to the lodge-keeper to open the gate quickly. I felt almost angry at being borne thus helplessly, like a sack of wet sand, through the village, or, at least, past the two or three houses that lay in our way, but there was, at the same time, the delicious feeling of rest and security; it was the last time I should lean upon that strong arm, and I laid my head upon his shoulder, and abandoned myself to the delight of the moment. Few words passed between us; once or twice, he looked down as a gentle nurse would look upon her child; but though he held me firmly it was lightly, and, as soon as we reached the Rectory-gate, which was in five minutes, he dismounted quickly, and then taking me round the waist lifted me to the ground, and bade me not stop to speak, but run in and attend to old Phœbe’s directions, adding, as he rode off, “I must hurry back to poor little Edith,

she will have been frightened out of her wits by the storm."

Happy, cherished Edith ! yet with all his anxiety to spare and shield her, he had stopped to think of *me* first ! The idea was a sweet one, but I might not indulge it. However, I had no time to torment myself, for the sound of horse's feet and Mr. Annesley's voice had brought my father out of his study ; and, when he saw me stand like a river nymph, dripping in the hall, he accosted me with more anger than anxiety in his accent, as he inquired,

"What folly now had led me to get myself into that plight, and where I had been wandering ?"

I began to explain that the storm had overtaken me as soon as I left the Grange, when Phoebe appeared on the scene ; and, pouring forth a stream of words half scolding, half coaxing, led me upstairs, while my father muttering something about my being as silly as Edith, not to have seen by the clouds that a storm was brewing, retreated to his own room.

But I did not escape utterly harmless, in spite of my constitutional inaptitude to take cold ; I woke next morning stiff and sore, notwithstanding all Phoebe's nostrums of the preceding evening, and she would not let me attempt to rise. I am

not sure that I offered any very determined resistance to her authority, my heart was as sore as my body, and I felt it pleasant to lie still and be cared for and petted ; it was a new situation for me at home, and when my father saw that I was ill, all the asperity of his manner subsided into desire to make me forget his harsh greeting of the day before. With Phœbe, I believe, I was always a favourite. It is a calumny to say that servants always follow the lead of the house, they have a strong sense of justice, and vehemently take up the cause of one who they consider to be put upon, as they term it. It was nothing to Phœbe that I was inferior in intellect or person to Amy.


“ Miss Amy,” she used to say, “ might be very clever, but Miss Mabel was never one thing to a person’s face and another behind their back, and there would come a time when people would see which was the better.”

Poor Phœbe, I fear her very love of justice made her a little unjust to Amy.

At this time, however, I was very indifferent to the justice or injustice of the matter, I only wanted to be quiet, and, as it were, to recover my breath before I had to take my place once more in the great race of life. So it suited me very well to be thought ill enough to keep my bed. Like the “ Convalescent” in

Elia's charming Essays, I had "put on the strong armour of sickness and wrapped myself in the callous hide of suffering; and I kept my sympathy like some curious vintage under lock and key for my own use only." He is quite right, "if there be a regal solitude it is that of a sick bed," and I had assumed this monarchy without the usual pains and penalties thereunto attached, for at any other time I should have laughed at the idea of being made an invalid for so slight a cause. I could lie there and commune with my own heart, and learn more fully to understand the part assigned to me. Mine was to be no active work, it never had been, I was to endure, to stand still, perhaps the most difficult of all trials; yet a soldier must not choose his own post, and was not I a soldier?

It was lovely August weather, and since the storm, the air had become warm and glowing without any of the former sultriness. I could have my windows open, through one of which I could inhale the delicious perfume of the flowers beneath, and hear the hum of the insects and song of birds; through the other, which overlooked the approach to the house, still sweeter sounds would steal upon my ears every morning about ten o'clock; for it was then that Mr. Annesley made a daily visit to the Rectory, and as he stood outside the



window of my father's study, or sat on his horse and talked to him within, and made inquiries for me and often held long conversations, every word reached my ear. Alas, how greedily those tones were listened to ! One day I remember Amy coming in while he was below, and I buried my face in the pillow affecting to be asleep, I trust it was a pardonable deception. She went to the window which was near the bed, intending probably to close it, but seeing Mr. Annesley below, she leaned out and spoke ; and I heard him say, " Ah, Amy ! how is the little Undine ? I hope better ; tell her to make haste and get well, Edith is wild to get up some charades and will not have anything done without Mabel ;" and then they went on talking, and every nerve in my body seemed to become an ear to drink in those musical tones.

In fact, it was only for a few days that I could keep up the pretence of illness, and at the end of the week I was about again as usual. Miss Annesley and Edith had been to the Rectory every day, and daily I had received a bouquet of choice flowers, and a basket of fresh fruit with " Miss Marsh's love ;" but Dame Margaret, like many another nervous invalid, had a dread of infection, and Edith was never suffered to enter my room for fear of I know not what danger.

So it was not till I was able to go about again that we met, and one of my first thoughts was to thank her for the lovely flowers and delicious fruit with which she had so kindly shewn her remembrance of me.

"I send you fruit and flowers, Mabel?" she exclaimed, with a startled air, "why you are laughing at me! I ought to have thought of it I feel now, but—well, I may as well confess it, the idea never came into my head. How I wish I had done it, you would have enjoyed them so!" and she looked quite vexed and sorry.

"Well, but I really have had them every day," I replied, "I meant no sarcasm, my room at this moment is full of exquisite flowers from the Grange, sent with Miss Marsh's love."

"Ah!" she said, laughing, "then it was dear old Gardie; so like him, doing the thing for me, when he saw I had not the wit, or rather the good feeling to do it for myself; but he might have told me of it—however that's past now, I want to ask you about charades, Mabel. Dame Margaret wishes to ask some people to dinner and I protest against such a dull proceeding alone; Gardie, you know, rather takes my view of the case, but he would have nothing done

till you were well, so now I want to consult you."

"I remember something being said about charades before," I observed, alluding to the evening in the summer-house.

"Exactly so," she replied, "and now here comes Amy just at the right moment, we can all three lay our wise heads together and beat out an idea between us, perhaps."

And the consultation began, but I fear I played a very indifferent part in it, for my mind had plenty of occupation in turning over what Edith had let fall. And so those daily remembrances had been Mr. Annesley's, and only sent in Edith's name, perhaps, that I might not construe them into particular attentions; and as the thought crossed me that he had read my heart, I rose involuntarily and walked to the window, as if by a change of place I could get away from the feeling of shame which made my cheeks so hot. But a sharp exclamation from Edith brought me back to the table, and, for a few moments, to the subject under discussion; and then, gradually, my mind wandered away again on the thought that "Miss Marsh's love" might have been only a cover for what he could not express from himself, and yet why should

he not send his love to one whom he had known from infancy? But I feared to tread long or far on such treacherous ground, and tried to force my mind back to the subject before me; but even that led me a-field again, for he had told me that it was Edith who awaited my convalescence to do anything in it, and now she said it was he who had held her back.

I was aroused from my reverie by Edith's arms being thrown round my neck as she came behind, and kissing me, said with a laugh.

"You absent thing! you have not helped us one bit through our difficulties, I shall tell Gardie he might as well have let Amy and me arrange it a week ago, and then it would have been all settled, and the invitations out by this time."

"I am a mere log in such matters, humming-bird," I answered, "if I had put in my voice, it would only have increased the difficulties you know."

"It is a matter altogether beneath Sir Isaac," Amy observed tauntingly, "you forget that, Edith."

"I know that Sir Isaac can do more than speculate on abstruse questions sometimes," Edith said, as she clung round me, "there were no metaphysics in my sick room, whatever physic there

might have been." We all laughed at the humming-bird turning punster, and Amy continued,

"You forget the learned disquisitions you used sometimes to amuse me by describing, Edith."

"Oh that was only when Gardie and Sir Isaac met, and the former was tired of prattling to me and listening to my prattle," Edith ran on; "that did not happen often, for generally Sir Isaac crept away when Gardie came, and after he had been talking to me for some time, he used to look round so blank to find nobody but Dame Margaret or, perhaps, no one at all."

"Oh fie! you wicked little humming-bird, to tell such stories," I said, pretending to box her ears.

"To tell such tales she means, Edith," put in Amy, "she has no business to discuss metaphysics with one man and love with another in this way."

"As much of one as the other," I said.

"Love?" asked Edith turning round, "who is the favoured one, Amy?"

"What, don't you remember the water-dog of Brackenhurst?" she asked, laughing.

"And does she really listen to his love?" Edith inquired, "Mrs. Mainwaring was telling Dame Margaret and Gardie so the other day, and he turned

away quite angrily, 'Mabel listen to Sholto Forster, Mrs. Mainwaring? you don't know her if you think that,' he said. And when she went on with innumerable proofs—ah, you may blush, Mabel,—he told her he thought it unwomanly in any one to repeat such things if she had seen them, and walked out of the room."

"Such things! what things, Edith?" I asked in distress, "what can Mrs. Mainwaring have invented?"

"Nothing worth crying about, dear Undine," she replied, kissing me, "you know no one minds what Mrs. Mainwaring says."

I was not crying or thinking of doing so, for there was in Edith's words much that would rather have moved me to smiles; but I was vexed that Mrs. Mainwaring should make me the subject of her gossip, and distressed to know what she had said. However, Edith went on,

"But I must not stay chattering here any longer. I shall tell Dame Margaret what we have arranged, Amy, and I shall make Gardie give you a scolding, Miss Undine, for withholding your help now, and refusing to be more than a spectator when the time comes; so good bye!" she exclaimed laughing, and kissing the tips of her tiny fingers as she tripped down the steps

into the garden, and ran off towards the Grange.

“So that matter’s settled,” was Amy’s remark as she left the room; and I was not much wiser about it than when we met.

CHAPTER XIX.

"J'avais alors dans le cœur et dans la tête, plus d'amour pour un autre qu'il n'y en peut raisonnablement tenir."

ALPHONSE KARR.

WE saw nothing more of Mr. Annesley till the day fixed on for the party at the Grange; he had left home again, declaring the ladies understood these things better than he, so he would not interfere with their arrangements. The same words were tolerably applicable to myself, and as I was not to take any active part in the performances, I indulged myself by spending the time in the library, that Amy and Edith passed in the bower-room discussing and planning.

At last the important day arrived. There was a large party at dinner, and it was the first time I had ever seen the rooms prepared really

for company, for hitherto the small parties of friends who had met round that dinner table had never been assembled with any formality. Mr. Annesley had a peculiar aversion to large state dinner parties ; no one was more hospitable, but, he said, compared with his neighbours he was poor, and to vie with their entertainments he would be obliged to expend more than he had any right to do, and after all, probably fail either to give or to receive as much pleasure, as if he received his friends in the sociable quiet style that was more consistent with his means and his taste. So, though he had very often small parties of six or eight, there was never any display, but much comfort, and a great deal of very pleasant conversation. Even the least intellectual enjoyed the parties at the Grange, for Mr. Annesley was an excellent host, he had the happy art of getting people together who mutually suited each other, and then without any obtrusive fussiness, so arranging them and leading conversation, that the best and most advantageous qualities of each were brought out almost unconsciously. For once, however, to please Edith, he had departed from his usual habits, and allowed her to ask as many as she pleased and to make what arrangements she liked, of

which permission the Lady of Calvers had availed herself to the utmost.

There was, as I have said, a large dinner party ; all those of the immediate neighbourhood, and a great many strangers from Winterford, and even more distant places. For my own part I found no pleasure in it. That odious bracelet I had won at the archery marred much of my enjoyment ; I had been so set upon by Amy and Edith, Mrs. Mainwaring and even Miss Annesley, that I was absolutely forced into wearing it, they argued that it was like the Crown Jewels, necessary to be worn on public occasions, such as the present, and ought not to be considered in the light of private property ; while, on the other hand, I knew that Sholto Forster would construe its being worn into a particular compliment to himself, so that my unlucky luck was a source of unspeakable disquiet to me. At the table, too, owing to Edith's wilfulness, nobody seemed to be placed as they wished. That I must be far from Mr. Annesley, I knew of course was inevitable, but Amy had an old gentleman who cared for nothing but his dinner, Miss Forster was equally ill-matched, Sholto Forster was neighbour to a portly Winterford dame, who seemed chiefly occupied in watching the proceedings of her awkward daughters and

sounding their praises to him, under which infliction his expression was anything but amiable, and my own neighbour was an old Colonel, who could think of nothing more interesting to talk about, than the several battles he had been engaged in, which he detailed fully for my edification. I tried to give him my attention, but the subject was not pleasing, and finding after a time that my answers were not as pertinent as they might have been, he turned from me and addressed himself to Amy who was opposite, and who, by an amused look, and one or two well-timed remarks had won his admiration. So finding my attention at liberty, I gave myself up to observation of the company, and presently my ear was caught by the sound of Mrs. Mainwaring's voice, who was on the left of Mr. Annesley.

"This is altogether a delightful arrangement of yours Mr. Annesley," I heard her say, "it is not very often that you deign to throw open the Grange, but I suppose we must attribute it all to the little lady in the middle of the table."

Mr. Annesley looked annoyed, as he always did when Mrs. Mainwaring attacked him, but he allowed that the whole had been more his sister's and Edith's arrangement than his own.

"Ah, I thought so," she continued, "we all understand that, don't we Mrs. Aubrey?"

Mrs. Aubrey, who was opposite, replied by a quiet smile, and Mrs. Mainwaring went on.

"I was at something of this sort not long ago at Lord Harley's, charming person Lady Harley is; Mrs. Aubrey you would like her, so superior! and the dear girls so accomplished! 'my dear Mrs. Mainwaring,' they always say, 'you are the only person who can make papa do anything,' and indeed, I believe it's quite true. Lord Harley, you know is a first rate man, Mr. Annesley. The girls carried off all the prizes at the Markdale Archery meeting. Ah, by the by, I see Mabel wears her prize," she added, bending forward to look at me, and then touching her arm with a nod and a smile to Mr. Sholto Forster. "And what are we to do this evening, Mr. Annesley?"

"Indeed, Mrs. Mainwaring, you must not apply to me for a programme, I have left it to the ladies," I heard him say.

"Quite right," she continued, "charmingly Edith looks to-day. Yes, my dear," nodding to her, "we are talking of you, dear girl! Oh, Mrs. Forster, did you hear that dreadful scandal in Winterford last week? Mr. Annesley don't listen you know,"

making at the same time a movement with her beautifully gloved hand towards him. "Eh? oh you naughty man! so like you! Well, never mind dear Mrs. Forster, I'll tell you all about it in the drawing-room. Tell it to Mr. Forster, Mr. Annesley? No of course she won't, will you dear? Ah, there's Miss Annesley going to move. Yes, now I have it, Miss Annesley's so like the Marchioness of Hardfield. Sweet creature the Marchioness is, always so well dressed, and very clever, knows all the dead languages! Oh, Mister—" to her other neighbour, "I beg your pardon, will you pick up my fan and handkerchief?—Yeess," with a hissing sound—"thank you," and having collected all her things, and shaken out her flounces, she followed the other ladies to the drawing-rooms.

"You looked so bored by papa, at dinner," was said by a good-natured looking Irish girl, as we entered the room together, "he is so fond of talking over all his battles which nobody cares to listen to, as we often tell him."

"I am afraid he was more bored by me," I replied, "for I felt myself a very stupid companion, and was glad my sister made amends for me."

We seated ourselves in a window recess, at a

table on which lay some books of prints. Among them were views of Ireland, and we turned them over and discussed them.

"Ah, here is Killarney," exclaimed my new acquaintance, recognizing the scene. "Were you ever at Killarney? No?—you must make Mr. Willoughby take you there; it is beautiful! I've heard people say that if Killarney were in Italy everybody would go to Ireland to see it."

I laughed at the blunder, and as soon as she discovered the ingenuity of it, she laughed too. Mrs. Mainwaring rustled up; "Well, you dear girls, what are you laughing at? Ah, Miss Crampton dear! is it afther talkin' the brogue you are? Handsome man your papa is, very like Sir Fergus O'Shane, related to the Earl of Enniscarthy, is he not? No?—you surprise me dear, I've been telling everybody you were nearly related. Well, I must go and talk to that dear Mrs. Aubrey, she looks so lonely there. Ah, do come and tell her some of your Irish stories, there's a good girl!" she added coaxingly to my companion, who, too good-natured to refuse, rose and accompanied her.

I was left alone, turning over the prints; presently the gentlemen entered. Mr. Annesley

came up to the table where I was, and drawing a chair, sat down by me.

"You were as much bored by your companion at dinner, Mabel, as I was by mine," he observed, smiling, "it is the penalty one pays for state, always to be removed from those one prefers."

"I fear others might make the same remark to-day," I replied laughing, "my neighbour certainly had no reason to congratulate himself on his position, for I was incorrigibly stupid."

He smiled without speaking for a minute, and then he went on, as he turned the leaves of the book rapidly, "I was going to make a very vain remark, may I venture to say it?" he added, bending down as if examining the prints.

"If it admits of a doubt, I should say not," I replied laughing.

"Perhaps you are right," he answered with a sigh, as he rose, "but I must not linger among these inviting scenes," he added, closing the book, "for Edith begins to find her undertaking more onerous than she expected, I rather think, so I must go and give her what help I can," and he left my side, and mingled among the company. A moment after, Mrs. Mainwaring took the vacant place, seating herself so that I became a prisoner in the window recess.

“ So I find we are to have charades this evening, Mabel, and what part are you to act? I suppose you will not be content without you bear off the prize for acting as you did last month for shooting, you ambitious girl! I see you wear the trophy,” she went on without giving me time to put in a word, “ but it is a pity it was not a necklace instead of a bracelet. That is not a bad word for a charade, but necklace would have been better, because there would have been an opportunity for an historical tableau at the end, you might have taken the story of the diamond necklace you know—Sholto as Boehmer, and you Marie Antoinette, Mr. Annesley Louis XVI, in the background you know,” she said with a meaning smile, “ the scene where Boehmer falls on his knees threatening to drown himself, and the Queen says so proudly ‘ Rise, Boehmer, I do not like these rhapsodies; divide the diamonds and do not drown yourself!’ it would make a charming scene.”

“ Scenes are not my forte,” I replied laughing, “ nor is acting either, and no one knows better than yourself, Mrs. Mainwaring, that my winning at the archery was quite by accident.”

“ What nonsense, my dear !” she said, “ do you mean the bracelet or the heart that was attached ?”

"There was no heart attached Mrs. Mainwaring," I said, affecting not to understand her, "I was vexed enough to win such a bracelet, a pendant would have made it quite overpowering."

"Which means that you would have rejected the heart—is that it Mabel?"

"Why will you persist in hanging a heart to it at all?" I asked laughing.

"Why? oh because there seems a sort of natural affinity between hearts and diamonds," she answered putting on an air of simplicity.

"At cards, yes, there may be," I said, "but we were not playing at cards, so I cannot see any."

"Cards? oh no, it was a far more exciting game to some of the players, Mabel," she replied with a laugh, "but here comes Mr. Forster, we will refer the question to him."

"Mrs. Mainwaring, I entreat you," I began in a low voice, but she only laughed and shook her head, as she said, "ah, my dear, I thought I should make you throw off that mask of unconsciousness."

"May I ask what is the subject of dispute?" Sholto inquired, as he leaned over the back of a chair.

"We were talking of prizes, Mr. Forster," Mrs.

Mainwaring answered, "in connection with this evening's amusement."

"I hardly see the connection of ideas," Sholto remarked, looking from Mrs. Mainwaring to myself, as if he thought the words meant more than they expressed.

"Mrs. Mainwaring has a fertile imagination Mr. Forster," I said, anxious to take the initiative and disarm her, "and was trying to make bracelet into a charade," he still looked puzzled and Mrs. Mainwaring began:—

"I could get no nearer than—"

"The celebrated diamond necklace scene," I broke in, dreading the answer she might make.

"Yes," she said, shaking her finger at me, "I thought the interview between Marie Antoinette and the jeweller would make a charming tableau, and Mabel a first rate queen."

"No doubt," he said, with a peculiar expression, "but unfortunately Miss Mabel has declined taking any part in the charades, our corps does not contain her name," and he run over the list of the actors, omitting his own.

"And you, Mr. Forster," Mrs. Mainwaring asked, "do you not act?"

"No," he said, he only appeared in the grand tableau at the end, as a piece of still life.

"Indeed ! well from what I have seen, I should have thought you would have taken a more active part," and she gave him a look full of meaning.

"You mistake," he answered quietly, "my genius lies in knowing when to be silent, a gift possessed by few perhaps."

"Looks are sometimes as eloquent as words, Mr. Forster," she replied with a faint idea, apparently, that some allusion to herself was intended.

"Ah, I see you understand the eloquence of silence, Mrs. Mainwaring, you would have been inestimable at our rehearsals," he replied, turning the conversation. "Words carried the day there, though looks might have been the object, for there was a perfect strife of tongues on the subject of costume."

"And what was the costume chosen?" she inquired slightly checked.

"No," he said, "that would be letting you into the secrets of our green room ; but had you been there, with your perfect taste in dress, there could have been no appeal from your decision ; nothing could have been more perfect than your dress at our archery, and now again, what can be more charming ?" and as he spoke he glanced at me ; but I had no wish to have any secret understanding

with Mr. Forster, therefore I affected to look beyond him, so as not to meet his eye, and only wished I could have broken the charmed circle of those flounces.

"Do you really like my dress?" she asked, smoothing it down with an air of complacency. "Well, I consider this a very inferior one, indeed hardly good enough to be worn except at home, nothing like the one I wore at Brackenhurst, the evening one I mean, I sent to Paris for that, expressly for the occasion." Mr. Forster of course expressed a proper degree of gratification, and having now fairly mounted her on one of her hobbies, there was no difficulty in turning her thoughts from the charades. In the midst of this discussion Mr. Annesley came up.

"I must beg a thousand pardons for deranging the display of this perfect Parisian toilette," he said, with one of his quiet smiles, "but will you release Mabel from her silken prison? Edith has sent me to ask her help at the piano."

Mrs. Mainwaring fluttered her flounces out of the way with an air half flattered, half scornful, and I escaped eagerly from the durance in which I had been held so long.

"I have been watching you some time, Mabel," Mr. Annesley said, as I crossed the room leaning

on his arm, " I thought you looked victimized, so I fabricated a little fable which, however, I hope will prove to be ' not all a dream,' for I have no doubt Edith does want you at the piano, and am very sure that I do."

Ah Mr. Annesley, if you did know your power, you used the knowledge very subtilty.

But there is no need to detail all the trifling incidents of that evening, though indeed nothing even remotely connected with Mr. Annesley could ever be thought insignificant by me; there were many of those impalpable *nuances* which even now I cannot think of without a quickening of the pulse, though were they put into words, all their sweet ethereal essence would evaporate; a look, a tone, even the modulation of a tone would now and then send such a throb of triumph through my heart; and yet it was far from being an evening of happiness to me, had nothing more material occurred to mar the harmony; but there was one incident which effectually destroyed it.

When the charades were about to commence, Miss Annesley asked me to go in search of some of those who were to take part in them, and who, with Amy and several other girls, had wandered down into the gardens. I found the group in the summer-house, and delivering the message I was

charged with, sent them all quickly back to the house. At first I intended to follow, but the air was so balmy and the scene so calm and delicious that, after standing for a moment or two to look round, I sat down on the steps of the summer-house and fell into a reverie. I don't think my thoughts dwelt much upon myself, I was beginning to accept the position that seemed allotted me in life, and though glimpses of brighter things would occasionally ruffle the surface, as a stone thrown into the most stagnant pool will disturb its stillness for a minute or more, yet as the dull water soon resumes its immobility, so did my mind return to the conviction which had been so painfully forced in upon it, on the day of my confirmation, that mine was to be from first to last a loveless life, and my own happiness to consist alone in seeking that of others. So as I sat there, my thoughts played chiefly around Amy and Edith; both were in some measure enigmas to me, and both had for me an equal interest.

These ruminations, and the enjoyment of the evening air occupied me so long, that it had fallen quite dark when I thought of returning, and such a bright flood of light streamed out across the lawn from the old mullioned windows of the drawing-room, with such a mingled hum of

voices, and laughter, and music, that I feared to attract attention by passing them, and therefore turned aside to enter the house by the garden door which communicated with the library.

I had but just succeeded in finding my way through the dark passage, and had hardly closed the library door, when I became aware of some one occupying one of the couches, who seemed to have been aroused by the slight noise I had made on entering. For a moment, I stood uncertain whether to advance or retreat, but there was little time for hesitation, I had already been seen and recognized, and I now found that it was Sholto Forster, who was coming forward to meet me.

"Then it is really you, Miss Mabel," he said, "and no phantom conjured up by my imagination as I first thought."

I assured him it was myself in the body, and laughingly apologized for having apparently disturbed his slumbers.

"I have indeed been dreaming, Miss Willoughby, though not slumbering," he replied, "and little hoped to have my visions so soon realized, for I supposed you among the gay throng in the drawing-rooms."

"Where undoubtedly I ought to be," I answered, "but Miss Annesley sent me to bring in

some truants from the garden, and the beauty of the evening beguiled me into playing truant myself, so I am now making my way circuitously to brighter regions, which I feared to plunge into at once."

I spoke lightly, and meanwhile had been crossing the room to the opposite door, my hand indeed was on the lock to open it, when placing his own upon mine, he exclaimed at the same moment.

"One moment, Miss Willoughby! will you allow me to speak to you?"

"Not now," I replied, "not here," hardly conscious of what I said, as I hastily withdrew my hand.

"But for an instant," he pleaded, "I do not mean to be presumptuous; but surely I have rightly interpreted your gentleness, as you too must have read my heart; you know my love for you, may I hope you will not refuse it?"

"Really, Mr. Forster," I replied, much annoyed both by his words and air, "you have completely misinterpreted my manner, if you construed mere civility with anything more, for indeed I have had no wish to deceive you."

"But you have deceived me, Mabel," he exclaimed with violence, "you knew that I loved you, and you have led me to hope for a return."

"When, or how?" I asked proudly. "Mr. Forster I will not deny that I have seen your preference, but from the moment that I first became aware of it, I endeavoured to shew you by my manner that—In short," I continued, after a moment's hesitation, "you have no right to use this insulting language to me, and forgive me for saying it is your own presumption, and no fault of mine which has led you into an error that I most deeply regret," and in spite of my anger I could not help my voice faltering a little as I ended.

"Forgive me, Mabel," he said attempting, though unsuccessfully, to take my hand, "it was far from my wish to insult you; the depth of my own affection has blinded me; forget my presumptuous words, and do not deprive me of all hope."

"I will not willingly mislead you, Mr. Forster," I answered, "so you will excuse my saying that I can never give you the most distant hope, as you are pleased to call it, that your love can ever be returned by me; I grieve to pain you, but it is better to speak with candour."

"And yet you wear this bracelet," he observed, touching it.

"But not as your gift," I replied, "it might as

well have been won and worn by any other lady present, with as little thought of its being aught beyond the reward of skill, but it shall mislead you no more," I said trying to unclasp it.

"Nay, Miss Willoughby?" he said, preventing me, "forgive my presumption I implore you, and forget words that I already most deeply regret. I have indeed deceived myself grievously, and misunderstood you."

"We shall both be misunderstood, I fear," I exclaimed, speaking almost unconsciously, as voices were audible coming down the passage, and in another moment a blaze of light poured in upon us, as the door was thrown open, and Mr. Annesley, with his sister and Mrs. Mainwaring appeared.

I heard a little laugh from Mrs. Mainwaring as I passed quickly, and the words, "my dear Mabel we are come inopportunely," but I did not stop to answer, and she went on; "Mr. Sholto, I really beg a thousand pardons."

"One would be more than enough, Mrs. Mainwaring," he answered in a tone very different from that in which he had recently been speaking, "on the contrary, Miss Mabel and I owe you thanks for liberating us from a dilemma. I was dreaming on the sofa, and Miss Mabel had been dream-

ing in the garden ; we met in the dark, and mutually believing we saw a ghost, were just groping our way through doubt and darkness when you flashed such a bright light upon our dazzled optics."

"Very cleverly turned, Mr. Forster," she replied, "but pray has your fair companion, salamander-like, been absorbed into the bright light?" I heard her add as I was a little in advance of them.

"It has only eclipsed her," he rejoined, "we may hope to see her emerge again."

"But in the meantime, Mr. Forster," Miss Annesley said in her quiet tone, "you are wanted to take your place in the tableau ; Ralph will you— Why he is gone too !" she exclaimed laughing, "surely never Manager had so unmanageable a company !"

"Oh, Mr. Annesley has only plunged into the doubt and darkness from which we have just rescued Mr. Sholto ; he is gone through the garden door," Mrs. Mainwaring replied. Nothing ever escaped her eyes.

I heard them coming quickly on, and anxious to avoid further questioning or explanation, I hastened forward, and mingled among the company, who, in the darkened drawing-room awaited

the rising of the curtain to disclose the tableau.

When at last their patience was rewarded, the applause that greeted the performance seemed to indicate that the effect was satisfactory ; for my own part I saw nothing, though it was before my eyes, my mind was in a maze, and there was only one thought which made itself clearly felt and understood amidst all the chaotic confusion of my feelings. How I managed to preserve calmness of behaviour, and answer remarks with any sort of discretion, I know not ; I must have been a piece of mechanism, performing without thought the movements I was accustomed to.

One thing I was fully conscious of, namely that Mrs. Mainwaring's eyes were upon me every where, and her ears open to hear all I said. I could hear Edith's voice too, apparently in full enjoyment of the gay scene which had arisen at her bidding. From time to time I cast furtive glances round, in search of Mr. Annesley. Once I thought I saw him in the distance, but it was only when the guests were departing that he came forward.

Mrs. Aubrey took us home, and as he led her to her carriage, and then helped in Amy and myself, with a "good night Amy, good night

Mabel," there was nothing remarkable in his manner.

The next day I enclosed the unlucky bracelet to Sholto Forster, with a few lines expressive of my extreme regret for the misunderstanding it had been partly the cause of.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed by A. Schulze, 13, Poland Street.

20, St. George's Place, Hyde Park Corner.

Original Manuscripts of Diaries — Histories of Particular Periods, Events, or Countries—Personal Adventures by Sea and Land—Divinity, Controversial Works—Works of Fiction and in General Literature.

Authors having such for Publication, should apply to Mr. Westerton, who publishes for Authors, on fair and equitable terms.

Authors sending MSS. can have Estimates, or the Terms on which Mr. Westerton would undertake the Publication thereof, sent, if required, in a few hours after their coming to hand.

20, ST. GEORGE'S PLACE,
HYDE PARK CORNER.

**NOTICE TO AUTHORS.—Manuscripts for
Publication.**

Authors of Original Biographies, Histories of Periods or Places, Narratives of Personal Adventures by Sea or Land, or any Work in General Literature, should apply to MR. WESTERTON, Publisher, who Publishes for Authors on moderate terms. Estimates of the Cost of producing any New Work, or the Terms on which it would be Published by him, sent to all parts of Town or Country by return of Post.

**Preparing for Immediate Publication by
MR. WESTERTON.**

I.

In 2 Vols. Price One Guinea.

THE MORNING OF LIFE.

By the Author of "GORDON OF DUNCAIRN," &c., &c.

"The heroine, Minnie Gray, is one of the sweetest female characters in English literature, and with her companion, Lily Græme, presents a picture of female friendship and confidence most exquisitely drawn and coloured. The moral of the story is excellent, and the catastrophe is brought about with consummate skill."—*Illustrated News of the World*.

"We have seldom read a story more genuinely interesting, or more calculated to exercise a good influence, than that contained in 'Gordon of Duncairn.'"

"There is a good deal of youthful freshness, and the germ of power."—*Spectator*.

II.

In 1 Vol. Price Half-a-Guinea.

NEW RELATIONS; or, Bachelor's Hall.

III.

In One Volume, Price 10s. 6d.

**SHADOW AND SUNSHINE;
OR, THE TWO COUSINS.**

IV.

In 1 Vol.

PILGRIM WALKS.

By Mrs. ROBERT CARTWRIGHT,

Author of "Lamia," "The Royal Sisters," "Christabelle,"
"Ambrose the Sculptor," &c.**"CHRISTABELLE."**

"This beautiful tale is from the graceful and poetic pen of Mrs. R. Cartwright. Its great domestic interest, its true and faithful portraiture of human character, and its glowing descriptions of natural scenery."—*Morning Herald*.

"The tale is unfolded with great art, the style is pure and graceful."—*Westminster Review*.

"AMBROSE THE SCULPTOR."

"Step by step we follow him, from his early essays in the paternal studio, to the close of his brief career. The young artist is taught to believe that suffering gives power: that he who has not known suffering cannot have learnt to feel; and the student who has not felt, has not passed that ideal through which alone a knowledge of the works of God is to be acquired."—*New Quarterly Review*.

"LAMIA."

"We described 'Lamia' as a novel full of power; that prophecy is completely confirmed by 'Christabelle.' We recommend it as one of the best novels that has come under our notice for many months."—*The Critic*.

"THE ROYAL SISTERS."

"Mrs. Cartwright's depiction of character is minute, yet unforced; her remarks sensible, and the whole story, for plot and interest, ranks far beyond the claims of the usual novel."—*Court Journal*.

V.

In One Volume. Price Five Shillings.

SERMONS IN SONG.

A BOOK FOR THE YOUNG.

"Thou, whose sweet youth and early hopes enhance
Thy rate and price, and mark thee for a treasure,
Hearken unto a verser, who may chance
Rhyme thee to good, and make a bait of pleasure:
A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice."—GEORGE HERBERT.

VI.

In 2 Vols. Price One Guinea.

ROCKS AND SHOALS;

OR, THE EXPERIENCES OF GEOFFREY HIBBLETHWAITE.

"Æquam memento rebus in arduis
Servare mentem, non secus in bonis
Ab insolenti temperatam
Lætitia."—HORACE.

"Company, villainous company, hath been
The spoil of me."—SHAKESPEARE.

. A few copies only of the following works are to be had
of Mr. Westerton.

VII.

Second Edition. Price 10s., Plates.

CAMPAIGNING IN KAFFIR LAND;

OR, SCENES AND ADVENTURES IN THE KAFFIR WAR
OF 1851—52.

By Capt. W. R. KING.

"This book is as attractive in style as it is interesting in subject,
and in our opinion it has claims upon public attention which cannot
be resisted."—*Morning Post*.

"Captain King's book contains the best picture that has ap-
peared of the incidents and hardships which occurred to the troops
engaged in the war in South Africa."—*Spectator*.

"To the statesman as well as to the general reader, Captain
King affords the most valuable information. His graphic style is
admirable. We know of no writer who has crowded so much of
interest and importance within the same limits. We have incidents
of campaigning; rapid and forcible sketches of military operations;
graphic descriptions of Kaffir tactics; delineations of their persons,
homes, customs, country and moral graduation, all presented in a
style so unaffected and full of honest energy as to well deserve for
Captain King the literary honour of ranking as one of the first
authors of his day."—*London Book Circular*.

VIII.

Third Edition. Price One Shilling.

VOLUNTEER CORPS AND MILITIA.

A Letter on the DEFENCE OF ENGLAND. Addressed to
each Member of Parliament.

By Lieut.-General Sir Charles James NAPIER, G. C. B.

MR. WESTERTON'S
RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

IX.

In 1 Vol., with an Illustration. Price Five Shillings.
THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE,
AND OTHER POEMS.
By ELIZABETH MARY PARSONS.

X.

Price One Shilling.
NAPIER and the INDIAN DIRECTORS.
By Lieutenant-General Sir W. F. P. NAPIER, K.C.B.

XI.

Fourth Edition. Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence.
DEFECTS, CIVIL AND MILITARY, OF THE
INDIAN GOVERNMENT.
By Lieut.-General Sir Charles James NAPIER, G.C.B.
Edited by his Brother, Lieut.-Gen. Sir W. F. P. NAPIER, K.C.B.

DEDICATION.

"The Author of this Work is dead.
The care of putting it through the press is mine.
And to
The People of England
It is dedicated ;
Because it exhibits faction
Frustrating a great man's efforts to serve the public ;
And shews
How surely the Directors of the East India Company
Are proceeding in
The destruction of the Great Empire
Unwisely committed to their
Misgovernment."
W. F. P. NAPIER, Lieut.-General, 1854.

XII.

A New and Cheaper Edition in 1 Vol. Price 12s.

THE HISTORY OF THE

CONQUEST OF SCINDE.

By Lieutenant-General Sir Charles James NAPIER, G.C.B.

Written by his Brother, Lieut.-Gen. Sir W. F. P. Napier, K.C.B.

XIII.

New and Cheaper Edition, with Illustrations. Price 12s.

A HISTORY OF

THE ADMINISTRATION OF SCINDE;

AND THE CAMPAIGN IN THE CUTCHEE HILLS.

By Lieutenant-General Sir Charles James NAPIER, G.C.B.

Edited by his Brother, Lieutenant-General Sir W. F. P. Napier, K.C.B.

XIV.

Second Edition. Price Two Shillings.

WELLINGTON AND NAPIER.

A Supplement to the above.

By Lieutenant-General Sir William P. NAPIER, K.C.B.

XV.

Third Edition. 2 Vols. 12s.

ITALY and her REVOLUTION IN 1831,
BEING THE ADVENTURES OF CASTELLAMONTE.

By ANTONIO GALLENGA, Member of the Sardinian Legislature,
Author of 'The History of Piedmont,' 'Italy in 1848,' 'Fra
Dolcino,' 'Country Life in Piedmont,' &c.

"M. Gallenga writes with the feelings, tastes, experience and knowledge of an Englishman: but in writing of Italy he writes of his native country. He has an independent mind, sound judgment, and plenty of common sense."—*Saturday Review*.

"Castellamonte is excellent; few fictions are equal to it in mournful excitement."—*Westminster Review*.

"Lorenzo Benoni is not to stand alone in his glory as an autobiographical expositor of Italian revolutionary life, for Mr. Westerton has 'just ready' a similar work from the pen of Signor Mariotti, well known in Manchester, and whose wonderful English will not be the only striking feature in his coming work."—*Manchester Weekly Advertiser*.

"Alas, poor Italy! Twice has hope towered up to the sky; twice was it dashed to the ground. Must we resign it? Oh! who would not die that Italy may live."—*Author's Farewell*.

XVI.

Fourth Edition, Price 1s., with a Postscript and Additional Letter.

LADY MORGAN'S
LETTER TO CARDINAL WISEMAN
 ON SAINT PETER'S CHAIR.

"Cardinal Wiseman has had a set-to with Lady Morgan in Italy, and may be said to have been beaten upon his own ground; Italy being such, by the way, it is a pity he did not stay there."—*Punch*.

"The lovers of our old English style of pamphleteering—that style of which Swift and Junius were the masters, and are now the monuments—will not regret the hour or so required for reading Lady Morgan's Letter."—*Athenæum*.

"The quarrel is worth noting, if it were only to show what manner of things those are which really do excite the interest and arouse the passions of the new-made cardinal."—Leading Article of *The Times*.

"But to doubt the genuineness of St. Peter's Chair, to discredit that holy relic, shakes that manhood which had stood unmoved by all beside, and causes his eminence to give vent to his feelings in language certainly more forcible than elegant."—*The Times*.

"The terms 'unblushing calumny,' 'foolish and wicked story,' 'truly profligate waste of human character,' 'assassinating of private reputation,' and so forth, are the mild and gentle reproofs which this meek man of Westminster has borrowed from those peculiar purlieus wherein he informs us he delights to dwell, for the castigation and correction of his female antagonist. Nor is his logic much superior to his moderation."—Leading Article of *The Times*.

XVII.

Also, as a Sequel to the above,

Price One Shilling, with Four Illustrations.

The LEGEND of St. PETER'S CHAIR.

By ANTHONY RICH, JUN. B.A.

Author of "The Illustrated Companion to the Latin Dictionary and Greek Lexicons," &c.

"Legend, which means that which ought to be read, is from the early misapplication of the terms he imports, now used by us as if it meant—that which ought to be laughed at."—*Tooke's Diversions of Purley*.

XVIII.

In 1 Vol. Price Five Shillings.

SIX MONTHS AT SEBASTOPOL;Being Selections from the JOURNAL and CORRESPONDENCE of the
late MAJOR GEORGE RANKEN, R.E.

By his Brother, W. BAYNE RANKEN.

Contains a valuable narrative of the unfortunate assault on the Redan, in which the writer had the post of honour and of danger, as the leader of the ladder party.

"Major Ranken was a most promising young officer, whose fate it was to be the last Englishman killed in the Crimea. His zeal cost him his life, for having to destroy the large White Barracks, and finding that some of the mines did not explode, he entered them to light the fuse again, and remained buried in the ruins."—*Examiner*.

"Major Ranken evidently thinks the attack on the Redan failed through apathy and bad management. On this question he speaks with great authority. He led the ladder party, and was charged with the engineering operations upon the works. He was one of the first men to reach the Redan, and one of the last to quit it. His narrative has a distinctness about it that we have not found in any other account. The account is long, *but it is an historical document, and the only one, we believe, that has been published.*"—*Spectator*.

"Respecting the fearful attack on the Redan, in which he took the lead, he has recorded many incidents which have not yet been mentioned, and which it is only right to make as widely known as possible. A more vivid description, or a more trustworthy account assuredly will never be written. We hope we have done enough (inserting two columns of extracts in addition to remarks) to recommend the best memorial of a thoroughly Christian Soldier which has appeared since the publication of the admirable biography of the late Captain Headly Vicars."—*Bell's Weekly Messenger*.

"The narrative given by Major Ranken, who nobly led the attack, is more graphically told, and evidently more reliable, than any which has preceded it. He is almost the first officer who led 'a forlorn hope' to live to describe what he went through in the performance of so desperate a service. No pen was so competent to place before us, and none has so completely succeeded in doing so, the attack and the repulse on that occasion."—*Morning Post*.

"Some of the Major's sketches are uncommonly vivid, and being taken from close points of view have a special value. No man was more identified with the dangers of that terrible campaign. We find he was one of the first to enter, and the last to leave the Redan. In trenches and rifle pits, in the forlorn hope and the midnight

SIX MONTHS AT SEBASTOPOL—*continued.*

battle, this brave young officer, in the fulfilment of his duty, gained the respect of all classes in the army. His own narrative, modest and without effort, is precisely such as a soldier should write."—*Athenæum.*

"Major Ranken's Journal is an acceptable contribution to the history of the Siege. His narrative of what he witnessed during that terrible time, 'the Storming of the Redan,' is the most complete and clear account of the affair that has yet been given."—*Literary Gazette.*

"His description of the assault brings the scene vividly before us. We must take leave of Major Ranken's interesting memoir,—it is a valuable addition to our Crimean literature, and the ability stamped upon its pages adds another regret for his loss."—*Press.*

XIX.

In 2 Vols. Price One Guinea.

THE WIFE'S TEMPTATION;

A STORY OF BELGRAVIA.

By Mrs. CHALLICE, Author of "The Sister of Charity," "The Laurel and the Palm," &c.

"The Novel of the Season."—*Morning Advertiser.*

"All that there is of noble, self-sacrificing, and hopeful in woman finds a warm and eloquent advocate in the pen that wrote these pages."—*Morning Post.*

"For its stirring interest and loftiness of purpose, one of the best novels ever read."—*Sunday Times.*

"It brings us face to face with things and people as they are. It is embellished with keen wit, subtle satire, and the deepest pathos."—*Civil Service Gazette.*

"The remarkable nature of some of the personages imparts a brilliancy and vigor to the story, which combines a good purpose with the attractions of an interesting fiction."—*The Sun.*

"Supremely eminent in vigor, and must command our earnest attention."—*South London Times.*

"The tale is one of thrilling agonizing interest, written with great freedom, spirit, and power."—*Caledonian Mercury.*

"Replete in its development with womanly tenderness."—*Weekly Dispatch.*

"We congratulate the authoress upon having gained this high literary prize."—*The Review.*

"Not unworthy the fertile brain of Dumas."—*The Critic.*

"The many characters which are introduced, and the animated scenes wherein they figure, denote a close observation of life."—*News of the World.*

XX.

In 1 Vol. Price 10s. 6d.

LUXIMA, THE PROPHETESS;
A TALE OF INDIA.

By LADY MORGAN.

"Most powerfully drawn, and the untimely fate of both gives a deep interest to the conclusion of the tale."—*Morning Advertiser*.

"The unvarying phases of the Eastern character, superstitions and customs, impart to this novel an ever-enduring freshness. The story is one of exceeding interest, and will be much admired by the lovers of the romantic and the sentimental."—*Sunday Times*.

"It is one of the best works of its class."—*Morning Chronicle*.

"Powerfully drawn."—*Illustrated London News*.

"There is much imagination in the scenes of the story and luxuriance of description; one of the best specimens of a literature which nevertheless exercised too great an influence on its age and country to be forgotten."—*New Quarterly Review*.

"There is a picturesque freshness about some of its descriptions which it would not be easy to excel."—*Critic*.

"A charming tale."—*Weekly Dispatch*.

"Replete with soul-stirring incident and deep interest."—*Country Gentleman's Journal*.

"It is interesting as having been one of the earliest productions of the lamented authoress, and the very latest on which her pen was employed before her death."—*The Critic*.

XXI.

In 2 Vols. Price 12s.

POISONERS and PROPAGANDISTS:
Or, a DEVELOPED LIFE.

"A tale of dark deeds, well and ably written."—*Daily Express*.

"The tale before us greatly exceeds in interest, in rapidity of action, in novelty of situation, and we may add in delicate delineation of character, any one of the cunning, crude, and rather 'slow' productions of the Tractarian school."—*Warder*.

"We entirely sympathise with the motives in which this well-written work originated."—*Burwork*.

"Devoted to a thrilling exposition of the wiles of the (Jesuit) order, which are terrible, secret, and multifarious."—*Athenæum*.

"At the present time such works are peculiarly valuable, and the one before us is clever in plot, extremely trenchant in style, and throughout remarkably effective."—*Dublin Evening Packet*.

"The author writes with fluency and force."—*Morning Post*.

"We should recommend the work for perusal as a production absolutely *per se*, divulging facts in themselves, and in their results, at once extraordinary and important."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"Never perhaps was the power of Rome's enchantments more awfully exhibited than in these volumes. We have been occupied to stupefaction with the Author's terrible facts, and when we say this, we pay him and his book the most unlimited meed of commendation it is in our power to bestow."—*Sentinel*.

XXII.

Price 5s., cloth, gilt.

FIRE-SIDE MELODIES.

By SYLVAN,

Author of "THE SPIRIT OF HOME," &c.

"The volume contains some pleasing pieces, and will well repay a perusal, as the author displays throughout a considerable vein of true poetical feeling."—*Morning Advertiser*.

"Among the gems we should select as the choicest 'She came to my Heart,' which is not inferior to one of Moore's best Melodies."—*Country Gentleman's Journal*.

XXIII.

In 1 Vol. Price Half-a-crown.

**CHRIST'S SERMON on the MOUNT,
AS RECAPITULATED BY SAINT MATTHEW.**

A Perfect System of Ethnical Philosophy. By NATHANIEL OGLE.

XXIV.

Price 1s., cloth.

Meditations and Prayers for a Sick Bed.

Chiefly compiled from the Works of Bishops KEN, JEREMY TAYLOR, WILSON, Dr. DODDRIDGE, HELM, &c.

"An invaluable book; small in size, light in weight, large in print, sound in doctrine—all essentials for the Sick Bed."

XXV.

Price One Shilling.

RICHELIEU IN LOVE;

Or, THE PROHIBITED COMEDY.

By the Author of "WHITEFRIARS," &c.

"'Richelieu in Love,'—unusual fact!—is entirely original."—*Times*.

"Written in a sharp, pungent vein, full of sharp rejoinder and searching irony. Anne and Richelieu, whenever they are in contact, maintain a perpetual epigrammatic warfare, in which the sarcasms of the Queen are parried by the minister with great dexterity and address."—*Morning Herald*.

"Many of the points are admirable, and as pungent and true as they are witty. Indeed, a smarter or more elegantly written play has not been produced for a lengthened period."—*Morning Chronicle*.

"The language is always appropriate to the characters—sometimes even lofty, as the exponent of aphoristic wisdom, or the embodiment of Scintillæ of brilliant wit."—*Observer*.

"The comedy is written in a brilliant epigrammatic style."—*Sunday Times*.

"The dialogue of this play is smartly written, the diction is antithetic, flowery, and satirical."—*Athenæum*.

"'Richelieu in Love' is one of the most brilliant pieces of dramatic writing we ever witnessed, and we notice it here in consequence of the scandalous persecution with which the unknown author has been followed. For nine years this beautiful piece has been refused a license!"—*Racing Times*.

XXVI.

Price One Shilling.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM;**A PLEA FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE BURGESS AND THE ARTIZAN.**

With an Introductory Letter to
THE MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE.

XXVII.

Third and Cheaper Edition, Price Three Shillings and Sixpence.

SPENCER'S CROSS MANOR HOUSE.

By the Author of "TEMPTATION, OR A WIFE'S PERILS," "THE NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOURS," &c. &c.

"A charming work for young people—the narrative of the adventures of some children with their attendants at a Manor House in the country; a book for all seasons, but well adapted for a present for young people at Christmas or on New Year's day."

XXVIII.

Price Eighteenpence. With Four Illustrations.

**THE LOST CHILD,
AND OTHER TALES.**

In Words of Two Syllables.

By Mrs. BESSET, Author of "THE BLACK PRINCESS," &c.

"No one has a happier knack than Mrs. Besset of writing stories for little people. She weaves fancy and philosophy together in a most attractive tissue; they inculcate a virtuous moral without the irksomeness of pedantry."—*Morning Post*.

"The history is intended as a warning for all other little girls."
—*Atlas*.

"It is not difficult to prophesy that these stories will be as great favourites with the young folks as Mrs. Besset's other stories."—*Athenæum*.

XXIX.

In One Volume, Price Half-a-crown

EMILY MORTON; A TALE.
WITH SKETCHES FROM LIFE AND CRITICAL
ESSAYS.

CONTENTS.

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON'S PRINCIPLES OF ART IN FICTION.	THE SHAM FIGHT IN HYDE PARK.
A LECTURE ON POETRY.	CAPT. ACKERLEY'S LECTURE IN ST. JAMES'S PARK.

BY CHARLES WESTERTON.

"A little, but a good book. We have very seldom perused a pocket volume of miscellaneous matter more interesting and entertaining, from the simplicity of style and graphic power with which the several subjects are treated. In the tale of 'Emily Morton' the author displays a power of pathos and effective delineation of character, which impress us with the conviction that, were he to devote his pen to novel writing, he would rank among our most favourite authors. Its appearance some years since in a periodical of the day, elicited the marked approbation of one of the justest and acutest of literary critics—the late Charles Ollier; whose favourable report on any production was a sure stamp of its excellence."—*National Standard*.

"A novelette by Mr. Westerton is an unlooked-for fact. It is interesting to mark that the principles which have led to Mr. Westerton's notoriety, were his fixed guides years back. Mr. Westerton's book is thoroughly healthy and English throughout."—*Literary Gazette*.

"Mr. Westerton is willing enough to show how books should be written as well as published, and in this little volume makes a fair enough demonstration of talent. The leading tale is simple and obvious, but pathetic in treatment and sentiment. Among the critical essays is one on 'Sir B. Lytton and his Principles of Art in Fiction,' which is argued with considerable acumen, if not always with accuracy."—*The Leader*.

"Of the other papers, 'Captain Ackkerley's Lectures in St. James' Park,' in which that eccentric individual with his 'Lamp of Glory' is capably described, holding forth to a motley audience; and 'A Sham Fight in Hyde Park,' are highly humorous sketches. 'A Lecture on Poetry,' delivered at the City of London Mechanics' Institution, and an extremely sound and well-written article on 'Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton and his Principles of Art in Fiction,' complete the volume. Mr. Westerton has done well in presenting these few effusions of his leisure in a collected form. He will do even better to resume the pen which he wields with facility and skill, and add the laurels of authorship to his other deserved claims upon public estimation."—*National Standard*, July 2.

"Mr. Westerton has shown nearly as much strong sense in this book, as he has manifested in his political conduct. His purpose is earnest, and his manner of fulfilling that purpose highly creditable to his natural talents."—*Bell's Messenger*.





